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**THE POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SYRIAN NATION-STATE
FROM DECEMBER 2017 UNTIL 2021**

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DEDICATION

*“To all the Syrian people,
to those who fought tirelessly and today are no longer here,
to those children whose dreams were stolen,
to those families that war torn apart,
to all those Syrians who still have hope”*

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My deepest sense of gratitude

*To the woman who supports me every day
with her infinite love, my mother.*

*To the man who patiently prepares me for life,
my father.*

*To the man that challenges me and does not let me quit,
my brother.*

*To the person who gives my life joy
and for whom I want to be better every day,
mi niece Bianca.*

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has always supported me.*

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especially to Ivonne for guiding and supporting me.*

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I. THEME

THE POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SYRIAN NATION-STATE FROM DECEMBER 2017 TO 2021

II. ABSTRACT

During the last six years the international community has witnessed the decline of the Syrian Arab Republic and how the war has consumed this state. Around the critics and the failed attempts of solution, the subject of the present investigation arises proposing the post-conflict reconstruction of the Syrian nation-state from December of 2017 until 2021. The investigation is sustained in the premises of the Theory of Conflicts to understand the complexity and the challenges of the case of Syria, which allows later mentioning the Theory of Peace to propose viable and sustainable solutions. The investigation begins its analysis reviewing the crisis in Syria and how the structural damages of the state; unleash a civil war that violently escalated until having irreparable consequences. The crisis in Syria is the conflict that most interventions has identified in recent times. That is why, in order to study the actors, it divides them according to the internal social constructions, the external allies of direct assistance and the agents of indirect participation throughout the conflict. After studying the different aspects of the crisis in Syria, the research finally establishes a reconstruction proposal for the nation-state. This solution suggests initiating in the areas that need immediate attention, to later identify conflict resolution mechanisms and finally, propose a reconstruction process that focuses on maintaining peace.

Keywords: Conflict, crisis, Syria, intervention, reconstruction, nation-state, peace.

III. RESUMEN

Durante los últimos seis años la comunidad internacional ha sido testigo del declive de la República Árabe de Siria y de cómo la guerra ha consumido a este estado. Alrededor de las críticas y los intentos fallidos de solución, nace el tema de la presente investigación que plantea la reconstrucción post-conflicto

del estado nación sirio desde diciembre de 2017 hasta el año 2021. La investigación se sustenta en las premisas de la Teoría de Conflictos para entender la complejidad y los retos del caso en Siria, lo que permite más adelante adentrarse en la Teoría de Paz para proponer soluciones viables y sustentables. La investigación empieza su análisis revisando la crisis en Siria y como los daños estructurales del estado, desatan una guerra civil que violentamente escaló hasta tener consecuencias irreparables. La crisis en Siria es el conflicto que más intervenciones ha identificado de los últimos tiempos. Es por eso que para estudiar a los actores los divide según las construcciones sociales internas, los aliados externos de asistencia directa y los agentes de participación indirecta a lo largo del conflicto. Después del estudio de las diferentes aristas de la crisis en siria, finalmente la investigación establece una propuesta de reconstrucción para el estado-nación. Esta solución propone iniciar en las áreas que necesitan atención inmediata, para después identificar los mecanismos de resolución de conflictos y finalmente plantear un proceso de reconstrucción que se enfoque en mantener la paz.

Palabras clave: Conflicto, crisis, Siria, intervención, reconstrucción, estado nación, paz.

IV. RÉSUMÉ

Au cours des six dernières années, la communauté internationale a été témoin du déclin de la République arabe syrienne et de la façon dont la guerre a consommé cet État. Autour de la critique et des tentatives ratées d'une solution, est né le sujet de cette recherche en proposant la reconstruction post-conflit de l'État-nation syrienne de Décembre 2017 et jusqu'à l'année 2021. La recherche est basée sur les prémisses de la théorie des conflits pour comprendre la complexité et les enjeux de l'affaire en Syrie, qui permet plus tard d'entrer dans la théorie de la paix pour proposer des solutions viables et durables. L'investigation commence son analyse en examinant la crise en Syrie et comme un état avec de dommages structurels, a déclenché une guerre civile qui a dégénéré violemment à avoir des conséquences irréparables. La crise en Syrie est le conflit que la plupart des interventions ont identifié ces derniers temps. C'est la raison pour laquelle, l'investigation divise les acteurs selon des

constructions sociales internes, des partenaires extérieurs d'aide directe et les agents de participation indirects. Après avoir étudié les différents aspects de la crise en Syrie, la recherche établit enfin une proposition de reconstruction pour l'État-nation. Cette solution propose d'initier dans les domaines qui ont besoin une attention immédiate, d'identifier ultérieurement les mécanismes de résolution des conflits et, enfin, de proposer un processus de reconstruction axé sur le maintien de la paix.

Mots-clés: Conflit, crise, Syrie, intervention, reconstruction, État-nation, paix.

V. INTRODUCTION

The international relations field has established as its main goal to try effectively to identify and explain the behavior patterns that the different international actors of the contemporary system follow at the moment of interacting with each other. Significant aspects, such as international security, frequently alter said behavior. Inherent in this debate is also peace and everything that can represent a threat to it, as internal armed conflicts do. The current crisis in the Arab Republic of Syria submits to the logics of this debate. While the nation-state has been destroyed over the past years, the international community has confronted a challenge, given that the efforts have not achieved to commit all the parties in finding a sustainable solution. In fact, the responsibility as well as the prolongation of the conflict falls on the actors involved. For many years they have focused their efforts to control the situation in defense strategies, while little has been materialized in order to truly solve the conflict and rebuild the Syrian State.

Therefore, the present investigation embodies another example of internal armed conflicts, in which peace research, at least for the Academy, represents one of the most important concerns in the debate agenda. The dissertation analyzes the current situation of the State from a perspective in which it is highlighted the institutional capacity to attend and solve public problems, whether national or international. Considering all this facts, the researcher has included knowledge from the Multilingual Business and International Relations Major, as the theme of this academic research proposes a multi-disciplinary approach, over-all from the field of International Relations. Therefore, it incorporates different lines of study such as International Law, Politics, Human Rights, International and National Security and Peace studies. Finally, the subject matter grows its basis from International Relations Theories, which aim to explain social phenomenon. In this case in particular, a tangible, practical and actual case of the global reality is analyzed with premises from Theory of Conflict, Conflict Transformation and Peace Theory.

The academic investigation starts by identifying the problems regarding the situation in Syria. In this Arab Republic, the conflict that started as a civil

war between the government of Bashar al-Assad and the opposition entered its seventh year complying with characteristics of a proxy war, claiming lives and harassing internal and external security. The crisis encouraged the intervention of different actors, who have condemned the events and have tangibly supported the parties in conflict economically, politically and militarily. Therefore, the severe consequences of the damage are those that build the context in Syria. Starting with the fractures suffered by the institutional scaffolding of the nation state, continuing with the chronology of attacks on the territory and finally with special emphasis on the victims of the conflict. The context now opens a debate on whether a sustainable reconstruction of the nation-state is possible.

Moreover, this dissertation bases its theoretical foundation on the Theory of Conflict since it serves as a reference point in the field of Peace Studies. It analyses the conflict through all its possible perspectives, as its identity, dimension, transcendence, deepness, and broadness, among other factors that will help explain it. Also, from this premises emerge new theories as transformation of conflict, which seeks to truly contribute to its resolution, management and administration. This research also includes premises from Johan Galtung's Peace Theory, especially its approaches such as conflict resolution and peace concepts (*peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding*), which aim to create broader applicable strategies to address, above all, the post-conflict context prioritizing economic and social development, reconciliation and retributive justice, stable politics and democratic governability.

The academic research finds its justification, primary from a social perspective, since the prolongation of the conflict in question; not only is directly affecting a population, but also it is a matter of concern in the international contemporary system. The rest of the countries intervening or not, are also impacted by the trail of horror that this problem is leaving behind. Then from an academic angle, since the contributions around the conflict should never be limited only to providing knowledge; but to enrich individuals and make them purposeful in the transformation of the situation. Finally, because there is an individual interest to find possible solutions to a conflict that alarmingly has not

found closure considering that after so many years Syria's situation is a conflict that continues spreading.

Once the importance of the subject is identified, the present investigation establishes the following hypothesis: *The development of the post-conflict condition of the Syrian State would depend on the individual efforts of the actors involved; which would lead to the resolution of the conflict and the reconstruction of the nation-state.* In order to prove the veracity of this premise, it has been proposed as a general objective to analyze the possible post-conflict situation in Syria, considering the role played by the actors in the context of the reconstruction of the nation-state. This objective is accompanied by three specific objectives that correctly focus on research. First, it is proposed to analyze, in a post-conflict context, the consequences and challenges of the crisis for the Syrian nation-state. Then, it aims to analyze the influence and impact, over the Syrian state, of every actor that intervened directly or indirectly in the conflict. Finally, it pretends to identify the components that sustain the reconstruction of the Syrian nation-state.

The type of research for this dissertation, on one side, is descriptive throughout its first two chapters considering that it seeks to specify properties, characteristics and important features of the phenomenon subject of the analysis. Moreover, it will collect data on the grounds of a hypothesis; expose and summarize the information carefully; and then analyze the results in order to extract significant overviews that could contribute to academic knowledge with the forthcoming scenario that is proposed later on. Moreover, this descriptive academic research is mostly qualitative by the way it emerges from the interpretations of certain context and expresses it in a narrative way which then will support the development of a theory, and to some extent it is also quantitative by the way the research presents concrete data, statistics and numerical ratings taken from organizations or institutions that have achieved objectively to assess especially the economic aspects that emerged from the problem.

On the other side, a descriptive-qualitative type of research is suitable for this investigation, since that initial method gives way to the subsequent research methodology that allows directing the investigation to the fulfillment of

its objectives. That is why, the present dissertation prioritizes in its third chapter in contribution to knowledge, the comparison and the inductive methods. The importance of the academic research relies on its results, therefore first the comparative methodology permits to make a contrast between the main elements and variables of the described reality with those of other similar realities already known. This method requires discovering both the similarities and the differences between the scenarios that are being compared, so that from these differences its possible to find particularities that help the understanding of the truthfulness or not of the hypothesis. Finally, once the scenarios have been described and compared, and after having found the particularities of the phenomena, then the inductive methodology also enters in process to make it possible to obtain conclusions that could explain the situation and that are related to current studies or theories about these type of cases.

In brief, the academic investigation builds itself from the above-mentioned hypothesis. This premise is broadly developed over the following three chapters to obtain a possible verification of it. Then, supported by its research methodology, the dissertation processes and analyses the information using the chosen theories of international relations with the purpose of academically sustaining all the research. To conclude, the academic investigation establishes its final contributions in the conclusions and recommendations.

- 1. CHAPTER I
THE CRISIS OF THE SYRIAN NATION STATE**
- 1.1. Analysis of the structural decline of the nation-state**

This subchapter analyzes the structural decline of the Syrian nation-state, which implies that the economic, political and social indicators of the country will help to explain the basis of the crisis. In addition, it analyzes the escalation of violence within the territory and how the different actors, especially the Syrian State, use force and violent strategies. Finally, the consequences of the crisis will also be cited and quantified, which will make it possible to reach an analysis of the management of the conflict.

1.1.1. Syrian democratic and political structure

Syria has been a republic since 1946, when the dispute for independence from France ended. This political period was followed by several other military dictatorships, which transformed the political structure of the country from multi-partyism to a more nationalist type of regime. Hence, the Syrian Ba'ath party was created, characterized by its violent means of making domestic politics, which has always caused international concern. Hafez al-Assad was the president of the Ba'ath Party for 29 years until the day of his death. Subsequently, his son Bashar ran his candidacy for President without any opponents, and continues to lead the country to this today. The political structure of Syria under the al-Assad regimes was transformed over the years. Even though, Syria, in theory, is established as a semi-presidential type of government of a unitary republic; the single ruling party, commanded by the al-Assad family, controls the political power and enforces an authoritarian regime. In fact, the President is the only one who can appoint the members of the Ministers' Council, adjust and create laws, amend the Constitution, declare war and approve the administration's 5 year plans (Center of Civil Society and Democracy, 2017).

According to the Constitution in Syria, the presidential term shall last 7 years with the right to a period of re-election. Nevertheless, the Ba'ath party leaders have managed to extend their periods under reforms that do not allow the alternation of power. This brings us to the complex electoral system in Syria. The presidential elections respond to the following dynamic: the candidate must receive the support of a qualified majority of the camera, two thirds of the members. Then, the elected candidate submits to a popular referendum and must obtain at least half plus one of the votes in favor. Thus, it is a purely direct election, but whose election is due primarily to the choice made by Parliament. In other words, the population does not choose its President, but rather fellow authorities legitimize and approve the candidate that shall run in the ballot. In this way, said nominee will never be faced with another contender or other parties (Fischer, Ayulo, & Chiacchiaro, 2017).

Its current Constitution also defines Syria as a secular socialist State, recognizing Islam as religion. Meaning that Arab Socialism is defining the State

ideology, which shall proclaim equality before the law and private property, as well as religious freedom. However, the al-Assad totalitarian regime, mainly influenced by the principles of the single party ruling the state, restricts the representation of citizens' interests and does not expand into other different political forces, as the diversity of the population requires. Thus, the current administration of Syria, surpassing its Constitution and ignoring the democratic principles, has not opened the possibility of truly serving and representing all its citizens, but rather suppresses freedom of thought, ideology and beliefs (Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014).

In addition, the Syrian government is divided in three branches: the executive, the legislative and the judicial branch. The executive branch is represented by the Ministers' Council, which is conformed by the Prime Minister, ministers and deputies. However, the President appoints all these members, so even in 2011 when all ministers resigned due to the crisis; Bashar al-Assad just replaced them with new members (The Carter Center , 2015). As for the legislative branch, it is the People's Council and it consists of 250 members who are elected for terms of 4 years. The two main political parties representing this Council are the National Progressive Front, which is linked to the Ba'ath Party, and the Popular Front for Change and Liberation. Nevertheless, it was not until the year 2012 when more than one party represented the Council, considering that for decades the mono-partisanship was a feature of the legislative power (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2004).

The judicial branch of the Syrian government includes different types of courts, such as religious, civil, military, criminal and security. The Cassation Court, which is the highest court in the country, handles the judicial issues, while the High Constitutional Court deals with matters about the constitutionality of regulations, bills and laws. However, all these courts are overseen by the High Judicial Council, which is commanded by the President as head of the State and other senior civil judges also appointed by the Syrian leader (Mechantaf, 2010). Noticeably, the three branches of the Syrian government managed to be at any point linked to and dependent upon the decisions of the President, which evidences the paternalism that administers the regime. Taking

this into consideration, even with the division of powers, which is the main characteristic for a successful democratic state, the political responsibility falls on one person only and for many years the amendments to the political structure have made sure of it.

Moreover, Syria, as a semi-presidential type of government, is divided into local governments that respond to the national government; meaning that power and the decision-making processes are not completely centralized. Since Bashar al-Assad took the presidency in July 2000, he promised political and democratic reforms. However, this led to intense discontent activities by politicians from the opposition and human rights defenders. The so-called "Damascus Spring", between July 2000 and February 2001, was a demonstration from a local government against the regime from the population with the authorities' support. However, it was later politically repressed by the national government (Heller, 2017), since the al-Assad administration was constantly showing that it is in favor of the semi-presidential system as long as local governors do not differ with the policies raised by the regime. The events in Damascus left such an impact that from then on, most of the opposition established the city as their meeting point to express their position on the political decisions or reforms.

In addition, Syria's foreign policy with Bashar al-Assad as a leader showed great continuity in terms of its doctrine, its instruments and the priorities based on its security agenda. However, there were also a growing number of deep and accumulated socio-economic imbalances that pushed Syria to a totally reactive type of foreign policy, taking into account that foreign policy refers to the strategic interaction between a State and its environment. At the beginning of his presidency, Bashar put great expectations abroad since he showed himself as a young leader in comparison with the rulers in other nations; he had great interest in new technologies and was determined to fight against corruption (Hinnebusch, 2009). The president then faced a complex and threatening national and global scenario. In that sense, the anti-imperialism discourse in Syria has been constructed, above all, as a defense of the state's sovereignty with a regime, which is characterized by its repression against opposition groups and minorities. Undoubtedly, the repression carried out by the al-Assad administration put obstacles and conditioned international policing,

considering that the international and regional scenario have been the only way for the opposition groups to get attention, achieve greater visibility and multiply channels of institutional access. By 2012, Syria's diplomatic condition reached almost total isolation, except for those states that were cooperating with the regime's objectives (Tawil, 2012), which will be addressed later on the research.

1.1.2. Economic indicators of the country

The main economic data in Syria shows the critical financial and economic situation of the country, exposing a tremendously damaged economy, economic contraction, low oil production and a civil war since 2011. The state's economy continues to suffer from the ongoing conflict, causing the business sector to lose almost 80% of its productive capacity since it began. Syrian Minister of Energy Ali Qanem reiterated that the Syrian crisis and violence in the country has affected all economic sectors, however, it has systematically hit the oil and the energy sector (World Bank Energy Sector Assessment Program, 2017). On one hand, the Syrian state was used to produce and export oil. Nevertheless, due to the crisis, the situation reversed and currently the state has to import all types of needs in this sector. More precisely, the daily oil production from 2010 to 2017 has suffered a 98% decrease and now Damascus produces 8,000 barrels per day while in 2010 it produced about 385,000 barrels. In addition, armed groups and terrorists have taken control of the oil fields and try to sell the stolen oil to obtain more resources. On the other side, the Syrian Minister of Electricity, Mohamad Zuhair Jarbutli, profoundly concerned, affirmed that Syria is producing 19,000 million kilowatts of electricity every hour, compared to the 49,000 million kilowatts hourly produced before the Syrian crisis. The results evidence circa 3.8 billion dollars losses for the Minister of Electricity of Syria (Center for International Private Enterprise, 2017).

Following the account of aggravating factors in Syria's economy due to the conflict, it is important to emphasize that businesses have lost almost 80% of its productive capacity since the beginning of the civil war. Therefore, at least for the sectors that the regime controls, changes were implemented to be able to perceive slight improvements in production and exports. For example, the agricultural sector, which represents 50% of the gross domestic product (GDP),

was benefited by the administration with better conditions and the industry has been partially relocated to safe coastal areas, far from the influence of belligerent groups. As for exports, it should be noted that those who have been business partners for a long time broke relations in the wake of the conflict. Then, except for those to Iran and Russia, exports are practically nonexistent, having decreased from 12.84 billion at the end of 2010, before the conflict, to 1.79 billion in 2017. This directly affects the country's imports, which also reported a decrease along the years of the conflict from 13.57 billion in 2010 into 5.65 billion by 2017; particularly due to the financial sanctions that those broken relations left, which also aimed to placate the situation (Gobat & Kostial, 2017).

However, there are sectors that, despite the control of the regime, are irretrievable until the culmination of the conflict. Services and tourism, which represented 45% of GDP before the civil war, will continue to be seriously affected. The production of hydrocarbons will remain weak because of the destruction of many facilities and equipment during combat and the seizure of oil fields in the north by terrorist groups such as the Islamic State. Syria does not have much participation in the world's hydrocarbon market. Even in its most prosperous years, in the early 2000s, Syria failed to extract much more than 520,000 barrels of oil a day, barely exceeding 0.6% of total world extraction. Nevertheless, the civil war and the imposition of European sanctions, the extraction of oil in the country began to fall rapidly. By 2015, according to official statistics from the Computer and Enterprise Investigations Conference (CEIC), amounted just over 30,000 barrels a day and from then on the extraction did not improve (Computer and Enterprise Investigations Conference , 2017).

In addition, according to a study by the English think tank, Chatham House, the war between the Syrian state and the different opposition groups, since 2011 has reduced the GDP of the country by almost half, 56,000 million dollars. Inflation, a monetary variable that measures a country's price level, remains high (39%). Price stability is essential so that the price increases do not drastically reduce the purchasing power of the population, inhabitants that in the case of Syria are in a precarious situation. This leads to smuggling and currency exchange in the black market, also contributing to the strong increase in the prices of imported goods. Foreign currency reserves, on the other hand,

collapsed from 17,000 million in 2011 to 4.5 million in 2017, due to the efforts of the Central Bank to stop the devaluation of the national currency, which depreciated by more than 90% in comparison to the dollar. (Chatham House, 2016). Moreover, by 2016, the indicators showed that more than half of the population was living in poverty and 20% (4.4 million) in extreme poverty, to which we should add unemployment of 48.8%, another contrast with the pre-war situation, when it was only 8%. However, many of these workers have not stayed completely passive about the situation. They are in the underground economy, in the so-called war economy, in areas dominated by insurgents such as the Islamic State, or they have enrolled in some of the different armies in conflict, which in many cases pay a salary dictated by one's profession (World Economic Forum, 2017).

A recent report by the International Monetary Fund emphasized the profound decline in private investment as a cause of low growth of the last years. The report mentioned that the persistent weaknesses in the business sector are the main factors that hold investment. These weaknesses are caused by several factors, such as tax, trade and exchanges regulations, arbitrary alterations in the financial sector and public administration, and also by government monopolies and a poor way of governing (International Monetary Fund, 2017). Both the Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation publish an Annual Index of Economic Freedoms in which index measures how countries qualify in a list of 50 independent variables, divided into 10 broad economic freedom factors. Among these factors are trade policy, government intervention in the economy, property rights and informal market activity (black market). The higher a country's rating on a factor, the higher the level of government intervention in the economy, and the less economic freedom. The countries are then divided into four categories: free; mostly free; mostly not free and repressed. Under the Economic Freedom Index of 2017, Syria stands at No.153 out of 159 countries, with a rating of 5.22 occupies the bottom of the "mostly not free" category (Heritage Foundation, 2017).

Additionally, Syria has been forced to maintain a war economy for many years, meaning that the cost of war also contributes to the deterioration of the country's economy. According to the World Bank's evaluations, the six years of conflict in Syria have destroyed their infrastructure and generated losses to their

economy of up to 226,000 million dollars. In material damages, it has caused losses of up to 84.6 billion dollars; as well as the inventory of destroyed buildings, around 101,000. The vice-president of the Syrian Economic Forum, Tamam Barudi, affirms that with that amount of loss, to recover the country it will take at least 20 years. It was also mentioned that, apart from the material losses, there is also loss of human capital, since there are children who have not been going to school for 4 years. In addition, throughout the Syrian territory there are great disparities, as there are areas controlled by the Government, while others are controlled by various groups, including opposition belligerents and the jihadist Islamic State (IS). Since 2011, the disappearance of companies and the difficulty to collect taxes have caused the State finances to collapse. The Government tries to continue paying the salaries of 1.5 million civil servants, so it is financed by credit lines and loans from its allies. In areas beyond their control, some groups collect their own taxes (Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2017). However, it is evident that in spite of this bulky debt, the main threat to the economy is and will continue to be the placement of all resources at the service of war.

1.1.3. Relation between the Syrian State and civil society

The academic research aims to also show the enormous impact of the crisis evaluating social indicators related to civil society, especially in terms of education, health, the index of human development, poverty, demographic changes, corruption and social cohesion. Although the humanitarian situation has already reached catastrophic levels, the continuation of the crisis will continue to deepen this disastrous situation with the imminent collapse of the education and health systems, the massive growth of the number of the poor, together with a chronic social fragmentation. Until the Syrians can establish the necessary mechanisms to create a credible peace process, in cooperation with regional and international actors to put an end to hostilities, this disaster will continue to develop, harming the interests and well-being of the population at all levels. The already substantial loss of sovereignty, combined with social, economic and geographical fragmentation in Syria is an indicator of a major bankruptcy of the State.

For instance, the education system in Syria is in crisis, with 3,000 schools damaged or destroyed and another 1,992 giving shelter to the internally displaced population. The school attendance rate has been reduced to 46.2%. There are very few teachers who remain in the country, thousands of them have fled together with their families, becoming refugees or internally displaced. The majority of affected schools are located in conflict zones such as Aleppo, Idlib, Dara'a and rural Damascus. In addition to schools, other infrastructure and educational assets have been damaged or destroyed, including school buildings and buses. But even in relatively safe areas, the quality of education is under pressure due to overcrowded classrooms due to the need to enroll displaced children from other areas. In some areas of the rural schools in Damascus, it is operating at more than double its normal capacity. This pressure has led to the introduction of part-time schooling in 3,089 schools around the country. The quality of education has also been affected by the irregular attendance of teachers and by the stress of having to teach in an environment traumatized by war (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017).

The health system has also been severely affected, since the country has lost 32 public hospitals and 31% of primary care facilities have stopped functioning. There has been a collapse of the national pharmaceutical industry due to difficulties in transport and storage and international sanctions block the importation of medicines as well as modern and specialized medical equipment. Many of these facilities suffer attacks from military operations, violence against their personnel and the looting of equipment and supplies and the shortage of health workers. The conflict has also damaged the national health profile due to the huge increase in the number of deaths, injuries and disabilities that need treatment, while private and civil society facilities have significant capacity limitations. By 2017, data from the Ministry of Health showed that 57 of the 91 public hospitals throughout the country had suffered some type of damage, with 37 of them (41%) out of service. Furthermore, the public ambulance service has also been seriously affected and at this time cannot provide vital services in many regions. The governorates with the largest number of affected centers are Aleppo with 162 and Deir Ezzor with 90. The lack of primary health care facilities is impacting the health of the most vulnerable, with an alarming drop in

the coverage of vaccines to children; in the reduced access of women to assisted delivery services; insecurity is preventing many chronically ill people from accessing medical care (World Health Organization , 2017).

To assess the impact of the crisis on the development of the country, this research analyzes the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI has as variable factors the following: life expectancy at birth, the literacy and schooling rate and income, represented by GDP per capita. The results showed that life expectancy had fallen by 9.9 years for 2016 compared to 2010 before the crisis began. The impact of the current crisis on the three components of the HDI has resulted in a decline in human development in Syria. The conflict scenario indicates that the HDI of Syria has lost 20.6% of its value compared to 2011, which places the country in the group of "low human development". Along with the crisis in Syria's development, the country registers high levels of social inequality. Before the war, the poverty data was 35%. The high rate of unemployment, the growth of the underground economy and the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth have fostered a climate of social instability that led to discontent at the beginning of 2011, which has only deepened during the crisis. In fact, said inequality is one of the many reasons that led and maintain the armed conflict (Syrian Humanitarian Fund, 2017).

In addition, one of the main reasons, which encouraged the civil society to rise up, was the divergence between the state model represented by Bashar al-Assad and the one proposed by the opposition groups. The current president defends a system of hereditary and centralized government in a single figure, while the opponents claim another where democratic guarantees, such as civil rights, diversity and equality of the different groups that inhabit the country, prevail. In fact, in the peace process that has begun in Geneva (Switzerland), one of the key issues has been the concessions that must be made for greater political and social openness and as an evident example, the case of Syria has been discussed (Buckner, 2017).

Millions of Syrians reject the form of government represented by the Al-Assad family; they take the streets and demand for greater civil and political liberties, as well as respect for human rights. The current president of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, belongs to the Muslim branch of the Alawites, who have

governed the country since 1971 despite being a minority. They represent near 10% of the total population. Their customs, of Shiite origin, clash with those of the Sunnis, the most orthodox branch of Islam and whose weight in the total population is over 60%. This has prolonged the discontent of a good part of the population for many years, since this part of Syria's population does not feel represented by the institutions. In many cases, these disputes have moved to the political scene and have raised radical armed groups that have joined the struggle (Laub, 2017).

The discontent of the Syrian population is also due to corruption as a habit of the regime. Syria has obtained 14 points in the Corruption Perception Index published by the Organization for International Transparency, which places the country among the countries with the highest corruption in the public sector, ranked 178 out of the 180 countries analyzed. The reports of this organization indicated that the bad practices had become systemic not only in the highest spheres of the Government, but also in all hierarchies of the Administration. The non-compliance with the laws or accountability, courts subjected to blackmail and pressure from the rulers, mafias or other pressure groups, meant disastrous consequences for employment, wealth and the country's future. In totalitarian states like Syria, laws were adapted to the interests of the elite, generalizing corruption in its various forms, from bribery and theft of public money and natural resources, favoritism, and others devouring official and unofficial institutions (Al-Sheikh & Hamadah, 2017).

1.2. State of violence and the legitimate use of force

This sub-chapter of the investigation focuses on the different types of violence that the conflict in Syria records. First, the escalation of violence that the State has had against its inhabitants will be addressed and all the regime's tangible decisions based on the legitimate use of force. Second, it is important to mention the actions of the counterparty, thus, a recount will be made of the violence coming from civil society and how they have handled the conflict and with what resources. Finally, when considering the violence factor on this equation, it cannot ignore the new actors that emerged from it and their performance within the conflict.

1.2.1. State's escalation of violence

As in many countries in the region, in Syria by 2010, the deep discomfort among broad social sectors starts showing signs of reaching the limit through multiple and growing manifestations and events. Considering that the Syrian regime was facing a context in which the Arab Spring was inspiring the population, as well as the activism that was taking place in the region, where Egyptians, Tunisians, Yemenis and Libyans were mobilizing against their respective political regimes, it was time to reinforce its policies and strategies of security and internal control. In March 2011, a group of teenagers who had painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall in the southern city of Daraa were arrested and tortured by the security forces. More intense protests against the Bashar al-Assad regime began, which extended from Daraa to regions of the Kurdish population in the northeast, the coastal cities and Damascus itself. The government alternated violent repression with announcements of reforms, while the security forces opened fire on the demonstrators, killing several, which caused many more people to take to the streets. The revolts spread throughout the country, demanding the recognition of civil and human rights, as well as the resignation of President al-Assad. The government's response of force was to suppress all acts of demonstration, in light of the determination of the Protestants to continue the insurgencies. By July 2011, hundreds of thousands of citizens were protesting across the country demanding the president's departure (UNESCO, 2012).

In Syria, protests were gaining prominence in the north of the country where the intervention of the army forced thousands of inhabitants to flee to Turkey. Despite the increase in international pressure and the resurgence of popular revolts, the Government continues to control the situation and announces a process of reforms and negotiation with the opposition. The al-Assad regime faces a situation of isolation and international sanctions on the part of both the West and the states of the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Under this regional pressure over the Syrian regime, a new release of political prisoners is decreed and the presence of a mission of Arab observers is accepted, however, the days of violence do not stop, especially in Homs and Idlib. The persistence of the repression against the demonstrators motivated the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly

of the United Nations to adopt resolutions condemning the Syrian regime (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2017).

The situation in Syria escalated over time, since important confrontations took place between the country's security forces and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in its capital, Damascus. The growing international pressure, with new sanctions against the Syrian regime and the closure of foreign delegations; forces the al-Assad regime to accept the peace plan proposal launched by the special envoy of the UN and the Arab League for Syria, Kofi Anan, and on April 12, 2012 a truce was decreed between the parties. Even so, there are still episodes of violence and new deaths in the country that raise doubts about the viability of the peace plan. This ceasefire agreement in Syria is the first of the few pretensions to seek a peace process for the conflict in Syria, however, it did not have the scope that was expected since the violence persisted. The situation is openly defined as '*armed conflict*' by both the United Nations and the Syrian Government itself. For this moment, the international pressure and the new sanctions were still not enough to persuade Bashar al-Assad to resign his presidency. Among so many hostilities, the truce in Syria ends in accusations on both sides of rape and hundreds of victims, thus the parties distanced even more from a negotiated exit and the escalation of tension with neighboring countries increased (Arms Control Association , 2017).

Both sides throughout the conflict gained territory as they also destroyed important cities such as the capital Damascus first and then the economic center of the country, Aleppo. With this background, the Syrian regime for the third year of conflict sought a rearrangement of the executive branch and demonstrated new intentions to open a dialogue with the opposition. This was another one of the pretensions to solve the conflict obviously with the administration's ground rules; therefore, the opposition rejected any negotiations if these did not include the resignation of Bashar al-Assad. More actors were involved in the conflict supporting both sides, and for 2013 the first chemical attacks in the country were recorded, causing even more chaos and deepening the social crisis. The Syrian Army backed by Hezbollah, Iran and military aid provided by Russia, continued its offensive to regain control over the entire country. By the fourth year of crisis, there was a new attempt to search for peace by the regime. This started with the international peace conference of

Geneva II between the Syrian Government and the opposition, which took place in Montreux. However, it ended without any agreement to resolve the war in Syria or any binding commitments, except to allow the evacuation of around 500 families from the center of the city of Homs and access humanitarian aid to the area (Human Rights First , 2013).

That same year, Bashar al-Assad won in the presidential elections in Syria with 88.7% of the votes; elections not endorsed neither by the opposition nor by most of the members of the international community. From this moment, the security strategy of the regime had to be expanded in view of the strong pressure that was already being imposed by the new belligerent and terrorist groups. By 2016, both the rebel forces and the Syrian Army were disputing more and more territory and the Syrian regime announced an offensive strategy to recover Raqqa, the main stronghold of the jihadists in the country. Thus, the government reached the point of the conflict; in which attacks that caused the death of civilians was no longer a reason to stop the forces of Bashar al-Assad. On September 12, 2016, with a death toll that reached more than 301,000, most of which were civilians, the country reached a truce agreement between the regime and part of the rebel groups. While it could have been one of the most reasoned decisions for that moment, it failed after 10 days since the attacks and the shootings had no intention of ceasing (Carnegie Middle East Center , 2014).

The total fall of Aleppo held by the Syrian army is an act that is considered a strategic victory not only from a military aspect, but also from a diplomatic one, to seal six years of conflict. That is why, despite the fact that there were still combats in other cities of the country, the regime was looking for ways to negotiate a ceasefire. Therefore, indirect negotiations were held in Astana between the Syrian Government and seven opposition groups under Russian, Turkish and Iranian sponsorship. The priorities of Bashar al-Assad's regime at the meeting were to set the terms to cease hostilities and to separate the 'terrorists' from the rebel groups involved in the fighting. By 2017, the forces of the Syrian regime and its allies continued their advance in the east and south of the country, taking control of numerous strategic points around Damascus and its borders. It is important to mention that the al-Assad administration continued to use chemical weapons in their battles even when they affected

civilians, claiming legitimate defense. On the other hand, the country politically was in the middle of a referendum for which the Syrian regime affirmed that it would be willing to negotiate a new form of government considering autonomy for the Kurds, and prioritizing sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria (Cafarella, Suomenaro, & Harris, 2017). In its sixth year, the conflict in Syria seemed on track towards a victory for the forces of Bashar al-Assad, since each time the regime concentrated on controlling the main industrial areas of the country.

1.2.2. Violence by civil society

To analyze the crisis in Syria from the perspective of civil society and the violent acts that followed, it is important to take into account the contextual background in which it was immersed before the crisis exploded. The Arab Spring is an event that impacted several countries in the region. After the dramatic way in which a young man burned in flames as a protest against the injustices and aggressions of his government, a wave of revolutions was unleashed. Motivated by the anger and impotence of the citizens in the different countries, they demanded the end of dictatorships, respect for Human Rights and an improvement of the situation. In Syria, the uprising of the revolts took place in March 2011 in the city of Daraa, when the first uprisings and acts of protest against the regime took place from the youngest segments of the population, for which they were arrested and tortured. The parents of these young people began a demonstration against the government, which hundreds of people spontaneously joined. The response of the security forces was brutal, dissolving the demonstration with firearms, wounding hundreds and forbidding the access of medical services to all the people who supported them (Slim, 2011).

This brutal action provoked resentment in the citizens, who took to the streets demanding the end of the state of emergency and the release of the arrested minors. Thus, massive protests began and for the first time the armed response did not dissuade the population, but it continued united proclaiming revolution, freedom and democracy. It was in that moment when the police repression claimed the first lives of civilians and with time the number only decreased. The Syrian regime then decided to apprehend every individual who

engaged in revolutionary acts against the government. Consternation and rage invaded the population when they observed the deplorable physical state in which the detainees were; the physical and mental torture to which they were subjected was evident. From then on, marches demanding freedom were a constant in the country, with participation that never stopped increasing and an engagement of the security forces that also multiplied. The president Bashar al-Assad was not willing to end his mandate, thus he implemented repressive orders to prevent his fall (Middle East Policy Council, 2017). What began as a struggle for democracy was soon transformed into a civil war, with an international framework similar to the Cold War. In this way, as the violence grew, the opposition against the regime was organized and the international powers positioned themselves.

The fronts in the Syrian conflict are diverse. More than seventy rebel groups militarily organized against president al-Assad administration make up the so-called opposition. Considering that the intensity of the protests had increased and the UN had already condemned the Syrian government due to the repression unleashed in the streets; the deserters began to form opposition groups, which formally marks the beginning of the armed resistance. These include the Free Syrian Army, Sunni and lay, and the Syrian Islamic Front, also Sunni, but religious. The latter receives support from powers such as the United States, France, Great Britain and Saudi Arabia (Pollack, 2014). The research highlights the importance of said opposition groups and also the performance of the supporters; therefore they will be analyzed in depth later in the investigation.

The impact of all actions against the civilian population increased the international pressure over the Syrian government, considering that the Arab League suspended Syria as a member in 2011. Moreover, the UN declared the conflict a civil war due to the number of deaths registered daily, and frequently urged the regime to open dialogues with opposition groups. The war was aggravated in early 2012, already transformed into an open conflict between the rebels trying to overthrow Bashar al-Assad and all the officials in the administration. The regime decided to focus its attacks in Homs, which was considered the capital of the revolution. The city was surrounded and brutally bombed, leaving more than a thousand dead in just two months, one of the

bloodiest episodes of the war. Homs would surrender two years later, since it was left in ruins (Bowker & Tabler, 2017). By 2013, Syria was already a total battlefield, with the emergence of the first Islamist groups. Then began attacks with chemical weapons, such as the massacre that occurred in Ghouta, outside Damascus. These attacks marked a new course in the war, since they not only left thousands of mortal victims, but also new scopes of the parties were recognized. The opposition fronts completely moved with the situation called upon the international community. It was when allies of the opposition as the United States pointed directly to the regime of al-Assad as responsible. Furthermore, the opposition's complaints were so effective that the independent UN investigation over the attack certified the use of chemical weapons and also revealed the use of neurotoxic products in other similar attacks (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

The civil war in Syria has caused enormous suffering on the civilian population since the first confrontations. The departure of citizens has become massive; thousands of Syrians abandon their homes every day to flee from bombings, killings or hunger. However, the rounds of peace talks between the government of Syria, the opposition and several world powers developed periodically during the first years of the conflict and afterwards they were less and less frequent as they did not reach agreements or advances. These weak dialogues of peace, although approaches between the parties to negotiate their positions, do not have the expected scope since the ceasefire has not been respected. Most likely due to a conflict as escalated as the one in Syria, truces no longer depend only on the parties that started the conflict, but also on the other external actors that emerged or became involved, who by the sixth year of crisis already exercised a big role. The truth is that the only official dialogues that have been achieved between the parties have been the Geneva negotiations. These dialogues act as a positive initiative from the United Nations Organization, which has tried to raise awareness in the opposition in Syria since the war began six years ago, as it is a war against the president that they will not be able to win. In fact, after being defeated in Aleppo, the opposition already controlled only 13% of the Syrian territory, which forced the political and military representatives of this insurgency to attend the dialogues due to their weakness. In addition, they recognize how the regime has

strengthened on the Mediterranean coast and almost all major cities (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2017).

However, the opposition, even with its weak posture, is trying to find ways to remain latent. Therefore, they seek for new alliances to attack the government security forces. In fact, by 2017 local media claimed that the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) formed a new-armed group that focuses on the capture of lands under the control of the Syrian Army. The new alliance, called 'Eastern Shield Army' tries to capture areas in the provinces of Deir al-Zur, Al-Hasaka and Al-Raqqqa. The presence of international actors is remarkable, so the Government of the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is supporting this alliance. Thus, they use Turkish weapons to achieve the goal of capturing eastern Syria. Unfortunately, these types of alliances are the ones that perpetuate conflicts. Since they use logic to strengthen the fronts to have more chances of gain. Nevertheless, they are only perpetuating acts of violence and, in the end, they are not pursuing the initial causes, which on the side of the opposition, were to restore democracy, fight for individual liberties and respect for human rights (Orton, 2017).

1.2.3. New actors emergence and performance

The Syrian revolt began as a peaceful movement against an autocratic regime. However, it gradually became a military conflict with jihadist groups which, in turn, increased the armed opposition. The conflict in Syria has several dimensions: class, identity, local and regional alliances and, finally, religious divisions. These elements have emerged as incentives in an increasingly complex conflict. The Syrian regime had already been forced to face the threat of radical Islamism in the seventies and early eighties. These antecedents and the totalitarian nature of the government of Bashar al-Assad foreshadowed the forceful reaction that the radical groups would display when the revolts in Syria started in March of 2011. This led the Syrian government to focus its efforts at fighting these powerful jihadist groups who were well established in some regions, particularly those bordering Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. The most significant jihadist groups operating in Syria, which will be analyzed below, receive funding from regional governments and non-state donors in an attempt to promote strategic interests. This support has given these groups a

disproportionate influence in the conflict. In parallel, they have recruited a large number of combatants, both Syrians and from other countries (Khalil, 2017).

In the first place is Al-Nusra. The Al-Nusra Front is a group affiliated with al-Qaeda that announced its creation in January 2012. Its objective is to take over the al-Assad regime as a step prior to the creation of a pan-Islamic state governed by the Sharia. The ranks of the al-Nusra Front contain experienced jihadists who have been involved in various armed conflicts and insurgency strategies. Thus, although their estimated number is from 5 to 10 thousand soldiers, they are recognized as one of the most efficient rebel groups of those operating in Syria. Al-Nusra stands out its implementation throughout the country, as it is present in 11 of the 13 regions of the country. Translated from Arabic as "Recruitment and Support Group", this terrorist actor remains faithful to Al-Qaeda. This group, since January 2014, is one of those that also face the Islamic State, since the latter has always distanced itself from the principles of Central Al-Qaeda. In fact, it is the leader of Central Al-Qaeda, Ayman Al Zawahiri, who has always insisted that the Al-Nusra Front must centralize the jihadist efforts to combat the Syrian regime, and that the Islamic State must focus its efforts on Iraq. Al Zawahiri's concern even led him, in early 2014, to demand a cease in the confrontations that were weakening the jihadist front and pushing it away from its priority to combat the regime of Bashar al-Assad (Counter Extremism Project, 2015).

Al-Nusra has occupied emblematic towns, such as Malula in Syria. The town with a Christian majority was held under the terrorist group control for seven months, from September 2013 until its recovery by regular Syrian troops supported by Hezbollah on April 4, 2014. Malula is, despite being released and due to the terror imposed by Al-Nusra, an empty ghost town of its inhabitants. It is also a war field, since it is located in a strategic position 50 kilometers from Damascus and in the Qalamoun mountain range that connects Syria and Lebanon. The offensive of the Al-Nusra Front against the Shiites has been recognized for a long time by the means of suicides in its terrorist acts. For example, in October 2017, the front carried out two emblematic suicide attacks; on October 19, it killed 16 soldiers in a suburb of Damascus and subsequently the next day Al-Nusra killed another 30, this time in Hama (Byman, 2017).

Secondly, we have the Islamic State, known by its different denominations as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIL; Islamic Caliphate; Islamic State or IS; or in Arabic as Daesh or Daish. In April 2013, the creation of this terrorist group in Syria is announced, which is a coalition from the Al-Qaeda organization in Iraq and its Syrian affiliate, the Al-Nusra Front; despite its leader later denying it. Although the number of members is unknown, it is believed that mainly foreign jihadists compose the terrorist group. It has grown rapidly as an insurgent group and has its fronts mainly in Homs, Raqqa, Abu Kamal and along the Turkish-Syrian border. The oil companies they control in Iraq and Syria finance the Islamic State, and also through the money they obtain with their kidnapping campaigns (Shamieh & Zoltán, 2015).

The importance acquired by this group lies in its recruitment capacity, its rigorous and intensive training for new soldiers, its management of social networks, the hardness shown in the fighting which is reflected in the taking and conservation of cities such as Raqqa. These factors concern the government and the international community, since it allows considering the possibility of Syria becoming a state controlled by jihadism, and thus this group would not take much time to try to incorporate more territories from the region. The Islamic State has been recruiting militants and training them in Iraq and then they are spread in the fronts they have all over countries such as Syria. According to the International Center for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) of King's College London, 80% of jihadists from Western and Maghreb countries wish to join ISIL instead of Al-Nusra Front (Heißner, Neumann, & Holland-McCowan, 2017).

Even the Al Qaeda leaders themselves consider the methods used by the Islamic State extreme. For example, the terror group openly publishes beheadings and acts of torture. The fear infused by this group allowed them to appropriate and expand through the Syrian territory, as in 2014, when the Islamic State took control of the largest oil field in Syria, which was controlled by the terrorists of Al-Nusra. However, despite his wave of terror throughout the country, by 2017 his defeat seems imminent. Barely 300 jihadists still resist in the center of Mosul. In Raqqa, the Syrian northeastern city that was headquarters and planning center, the Syrian Army surrounded thousands of

foreign fighters of the Islamic State (European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs., 2017). While it is true that their capacity to occupy territories has been remarkable, with the international support that the government has, their extraction is becoming more and more tangible.

Finally, it is also important to mention the Islamic Front. In November 2013, seven rebel groups merged to form the Islamic Front, possibly the largest alliance of the opposition. This new alliance does not include groups associated with al-Qaeda as the Islamic State or al-Nusra do, but is explicitly a Syrian Islamist coalition. Ahrar-al-Shaam is made up of a variety of around 50 conservative Islamic groups and jihadist groups, which operate mainly in northern Syria but have an implantation throughout the territory. This terrorist group insists on the rights of minorities, but its ideological position is not as extreme as the one of Al-Nusra. It is believed that they are financed by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and often employs a nationalist rhetoric that distinguishes it from transnational jihadist movements. Its members are between 45,000 and 50,000, counting the seven Islamist brigades that compose it. Some of its members had once belonged to the Free Syrian Army (FSA). The Islamic Front follows very general lines of action such as working for the revolution, staying out of the radicalism of the two aforementioned jihadist groups and preserving the territorial integrity of the country. The Islamic Front does support the creation of a caliphate and refused to participate in the second round of dialogues in Geneva (Intitute Montaigne , 2017).

1.3. Consequences and management of the crisis

In this sub-chapter of the academic investigation, the Syrian conflict is furthered analyzed by emphasizing the consequences in terms of breaches and how they have been managed by the responsible actors and before the law. Therefore, this section highlights the importance of making an account of the war victims, of the migratory processes that have arisen and the refugee crisis. In addition, by analyzing the premises of international regulations, it will address the transgression of human rights against the civil Syrian population that did not join any of the parties from this war. Finally, this part of the research reports the breach in terms of humanitarian law in Syria's case.

1.3.1. Victims, migratory processes and refugees from the Syrian crisis

Six years have passed since the beginning of the war in Syria. Undoubtedly, it is the most relevant armed conflict of the twenty-first century and its more specific effects can be summarized as follows. According to the annual report of the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, at least 346,612 people approximately have died in Syria since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, including more than 103 thousand civilians who have lost their lives in artillery and aerial attacks, in shootings or in prison. It is important to remember that this organization has volunteers working all over the country, who exclusively in charge of reporting everything that is happening with the crisis in Syria in terms of victims. Thus, the latest data released by the NGO report that 103,490 civilians have been killed, 19,116 of which were minors. Also, only the Syrian Army has killed a total of 24,229 civilians in bombings; another 6,328 were assassinated in missile attacks by the Russian aviation, and another 2,775 by bombings of the international coalition led by the United States (Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, 2017).

Moreover, 552 civilians have been killed in artillery and air attacks by Turkish forces, which intervene in northern Syria, and 345 by the Turkish border police. In addition, according to the Observatory 14,739 people have died in prisons and detention centers of the Government of Damascus, although the report noted that the count does not include the nearly 45 thousand people who were tortured to death in those places in the past years. On the other hand, 63,251 soldiers of the government forces have passed away since 2011, in addition to 48,112 Syrian citizens who allied them, as well as 7,481 non-Syrian Shiite militiamen and 1,592 members of the Lebanese Hezbollah group. While in the rebel ranks and Islamist groups have died 57,309 local fighters and 62,619 foreigners, mainly Arabs (Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2017). At this point, it is important to emphasize that presenting the victims of this conflict in numbers and in explicit images is the only thing that has remained since neither of the parties has assumed its share of the responsibility for the bloody scenario presented to us by the count of victims in Syria.

Added to this situation are the internal displacements of Syrian citizens who still remain in the country. Until 2016, the number of displaced people reached approximately 6.6 million, that means Syrian citizens who were forced to flee from the cities where they lived due to the constant fighting, bombing or common security issues since crime levels are overwhelmed in Syria. UNHCR, in coalition with other non-governmental organizations, reported helping 115,000 people in situations of vulnerability. In fact, the refugee camps are the main settlement centers of said displaced citizens. These fields are institutionalized assistance networks that rise quickly to offer immediate help. Sometimes they become cities, since what was established as a temporary solution turns into a permanent location and even a place where new generations grow. Thus, the refugee camps within Syria are the first alternative for those who do not want to leave the country, although they cannot find food, medicines and water inside the country (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2016).

Additionally, the refugee crisis that emerged after the war in Syria is added to this framework. Since 2011, when the war started, the massive migration increased until it became the biggest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. 4.8 million Syrians have been pushed by the conflict to leave their country, and this number refers exclusively to the refugees who registered with the United Nations when they left Syria and arrived in a refuge country, since it is presumed that the number is higher. Syrian refugees, on their way to Europe or neighboring countries, face physical and bureaucratic problems and obstacles, such as border authorities, the police or violent national citizens. During the journey, they are deceived to buy European identity documents or transported in unsafe vehicles that put their lives at risk, in exchange for large amounts of money. The UNHCR in its 2016 report shows that the main routes for transit and migration of refugees are to neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. In other cases, Syrian citizens decide to enter the Mediterranean Sea in order to apply for asylum in Greece, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Austria or Germany, despite the fact that it is illegal and it leaves them in situations of extreme poverty and helplessness (UN Refugee Agency , 2016).

During 2016, the European Union received 1,204,280 asylum requests from 143 countries; 27.8% of this number corresponds to Syrian individuals. Greece, for instance, has become the starting point of millions of refugees who wait for their chance to reach other countries. This country is considered a large refugee camp, given the amount of resources that the Greek government has allocated to address the situation. However, the migration process has several stages and obstacles for the Syrian refugees. From the East, the route begins at the border with Turkey, and then the journey continues to Macedonia, to try to overcome the first terrestrial obstacle, the border fence of Bulgaria. This is one of the alternative routes of those citizens, for those who do not want to risk their lives crossing the sea in dangerous conditions to reach the coasts of Greece (International Organization for Migration , 2015).

In addition, another problem arising from the war that Syrian refugees shall face is the integration process to the new environment in host countries. In many cases nationals are not readily accepting of Syrian refugees. The problem is that there cannot be integration without relocation and the European governments do not intend to resume discussions in terms of resettlement for refugees. Instead, they have devoted all their efforts to closing their borders, alleging a lack of resources and state budget that should be allocated for the number of refugees that the crisis is forcing them to accept. It is important to keep in mind, however, that none of these people have chosen to become a refugee; these individuals and their families are forced to escape in order to save their lives. They run from war, from persecution, from oppression and from terrorism. Most of them have achieved a safe establishment in the surrounding countries (Alexandridis, 2017). For the ones that have not, though, it must be considered that they are people who should receive equal treatment, obtain protection and assistance, as well as opportunities to be relocated to third countries regardless of their religion, nationality, race and political opinions.

As a last resort in this framework of victims, are those Syrian citizens who have decided to return to the country. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 440,000 displaced Syrian refugees returned to their homes from inside and outside the country in the first six months of 2017. In fact, first attempts began with 260,000 Syrian refugees who returned in

2015, mainly from Turkey. The motivation of the returns lies in the need to search for family members, verify the status of their properties and, in some cases, is based on their perception of improvement of the security conditions in certain parts of the country. It is true that the security has increased in those areas to which the people have returned since those areas are controlled by the Syrian Army, such as the provinces of Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus (Yahya, 2017).

1.3.2. Transgression of human rights under international regulations

With the passage of time and the development of the civil war that impacts the Syrian nation, the population's human rights have been violated in different ways. The terrible escalation of homicides, torture, arbitrary detention and destruction of houses and buildings in Syria demonstrates the level of abuses committed. Syria is currently considered one of the countries that has most violated human rights, as are defined by the United Nations as the essential guarantees to live as human beings. The problem of human rights in Syria represents a serious phenomenon due to the brutality of the acts that have been committed in this country. There are several types of crimes that have been denounced by international organizations, who affirm that the crimes committed have reached such degree that they currently can be considered as crimes against humanity, due to the level of commotion that they have generated internationally. At the international level, the media transmit information about the situation in Syria, openly exposing human rights violations that have been committed during the course of the civil war, perpetrated by both the Syrian army and the armed opposition. These include torture and extrajudicial executions, and forced disappearances among others (Piccone, 2016).

In addition, the international community has condemned the indiscriminate nature of the series of explosions that caused numerous deaths in Damascus, Idlib, Aleppo and other areas of Syria. The violations committed in this country range from the burning of homes, the systematic interruption of the distribution of food and drink in some areas of the country, and the lack of medical attention. The complaints also highlight the fatalities due to the bombings that were carried out throughout the country, which have affected the

civilian population including children, who are frequently the part of the population that suffers the most by such types of attacks. Likewise, the Amnesty International reports denounce the cases of death and torture of children, as well as the cases of adolescents arrested and interrogated by the Syrian army in order to admit that their relatives are members of the opposition groups. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that Syria is a country that has ratified International Treaties that protect human rights, however, the civil war has generated a lot of human rights violations of its population, leaving aside the fulfillment and the respect of these Treaties, including the ones stated on its own Constitution, which has been amended several times and that in many of its articles speaks about human rights (Amnesty International , 2017).

The performance of the parties in combat in the Syrian war can also be categorized as an abuse against human rights, given the cruel chemical attacks against the civilian population, which contribute to the alarming situation in Syria. Although the use of chemical weapons is prohibited, the fundamental rights of the people were violated, acts that are condemned by both the country's Constitution, as well as by International Law. Moreover, it can be mentioned that the parties involved have also committed abuses against the third generation rights, which guarantee the right to peace and tranquility, as well as quality of life that must be guaranteed to every human being, regardless of their social status, race or sex (Theisen, 2017). If the aforementioned data in this investigation is taken into consideration, then the Syrian case can definitely be characterized as a violation of human rights by the number of deaths recorded in the conflict, as well as the number of refugees and displaced individuals.

In fact, taking into consideration alone the refugees, said data demonstrates sum transgressions to the human rights of the Syrian population according to international regulations. From this subject, the critics relapse on the member states of the European Union and their individualistic way of acting regarding the crisis, despite being part of an international community and an alliance of countries that established the right to asylum in compliance with the Geneva Convention and the Protocol of the Statute of the Refugees. The Right of Protection, which states that collective expulsions are prohibited and that no one can be returned, expelled or extradited to a State in which there is a

serious risk of being subjected to death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, seems to have been forgotten. The truth is that the immobility and inability to provide solutions that help ease this problem of a humanitarian nature exposes the weakness of the European Union when facing problems of common nature. It also discloses the lack of action and clear guidelines that could link them to be supportive when it comes to managing problems that do not directly affect their national borders (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2017).

Moreover, women, children and girls have particularly faced violence during this conflict. The United Nations through its agencies has documented that the use of rape as a weapon of war is widespread in Syria. The reports expose that the Government detention facilities are the headquarters of large-scale sexual violence against men, women and even children. Also, acts of sexual harassment, intimidation and rape of women at checkpoints are becoming more common. There are also documented cases of kidnapping performed by the opposition groups, as they use children and women as currency in exchanges of prisoners. The problem spreads also by the fact that usually cases of sexual violence are not reported, or are reported late, due to a lack of medical documents or because assistance to women held in detention centers is denied. This is in addition to the serious violations that have also been committed against children, such as their recruitment, kidnapping or illegal detention by armed actors (Human Rights Council, 2016).

Additionally, it is important to remember the human rights treaties ratified by Syria. In particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT), the International Covenant on Human Rights Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). All these focus their efforts on securing the right to life, the prohibition of torture, guarantees of the freedom and security of people, economic and social rights, the right to health and an adequate standard of living, as well as the rights of women and children. However, the situation in Syria shows how the state has

failed to comply with the obligations it acquired by adhering to these treaties and human rights organizations (Portilla, 2016).

Finally, the problem of human rights in Syria has led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in history, therefore the International Community has asked the United Nations Organization to investigate the events that have taken place in this country in order to protect the victims and put an end to this conflict. It has not been possible to reach a common position where the welfare of the Syrian population and the respect and protection of human rights can be guaranteed. In response, the international community should take action to protect the civilian population and prevent further crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Measures that finally involve an effective control of weapons and ensure that they are not used to commit serious human rights violations should be implemented.

1.3.3. Breach of humanitarian law

Human Rights have become a topic of great relevance in the international context, due to the subscription and ratification of the different International Treaties that have been adopted by most of the countries in the world. Currently, there are a variety of treaties and protocols that are in charge of establishing the guidelines to ensure respect of human rights. However, the armed conflict in Syria is now more than six years long, constituting one of the most devastating wars and the scene of serious violations of human rights. Many of these violations are classified by the international community as crimes against humanity and war crimes, due to the brutality of the abuses committed and the continuous violations in terms of International Humanitarian Law.

In this sense, it is important to consider that the Syrian Arab Republic subscribed to the Geneva Conventions; which are totally related to humanitarian law since it is the part of international law that is used in times of war. They include provisions for the protection of the wounded and sick of the armed forces, of the prisoners of war and of civilians exposed, in case of international conflict, to the arbitrariness of a foreign power. With the signing of the aforementioned treaties, Syria is obliged to guarantee humanitarian treatment for the non-combatants, in this case the civilian population and also

for all the members of the armed forces or combat groups that have retired from the conflict (Bellal, 2017). However, in Syria the obligations that this agreement demands are not being fulfilled, since in the combats fought between the armed forces and the opposition groups, respect for the life of non-combatants has not been guaranteed. It is important to note that the attacks carried out by the groups in combat are performed in the middle of the Syrian cities and not on battlefields.

More specifically, the contradictions could be evidenced if the fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the protection of civilians in times of war, is taken into account to apply it to the case of Syria. Since many of the Syrian cities have been targeted by the government and the opposition, leaving aside the guarantee and protection of the life of the people who live in these areas. This was the case of the attacks that took place in Damascus, Daraa, Homs, Aleppo, Ghouta and other cities inhabited by civilians who did not participate in the combats, undoubtedly representing violations of human rights. In addition, the bombing of some of the Syrian cities and the attacks of Ghouta using chemical weapons, where so many civilians died, shows clear evidence of violation to the above-mentioned article. Many of the attacks were caused directly by the opposition who took innocent civilian population as a shield. The attacks against the population include a list of crimes, such as torture, executions and forced disappearances, among others.

Also the Geneva agreements condemn any attempt against life, health, physical or mental integrity, cruel treatment such as the torture of people, the taking of hostages or acts of terrorism. This allows us to question and criticize the indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population in Syria, performed by the government forces as well as by the opposition and jihadist groups, since they constitute a violation of all these principles. However, these agreements also face their limitations; when the leaders of the states in full exercise of their sovereignty decide to minimize or aggravate the acts of violence according to their interests. This has prevented organisms such as the Security Council from acting effectively and from fully applying the principles of humanitarian law against those responsible for so many victims (Sterio, 2017).

Another international instrument that is important to mention in the Syrian conflict is the International Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The adherence of Syria to this treaty could be a result of the international community's pressure; especially after the resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, due to the chemical attacks committed against the Syrian population. However, the Syrian State has not managed to guarantee the lives of the inhabitants who daily have to experience extreme situations that put their lives at risk (Garriaud-Maylam, *The war in Syria and Iraq: Humanitarian Aspects*, 2017). The adherence to international conventions and treaties, by its nature, is a positive initiative of the states. Though, in the case of the conflict in Syria, the state cannot assure that either the government or the opposition would not violate said treaties.

Another way to attempt against international humanitarian law is to engage in acts that attempt against the rights of the most vulnerable parts of the population. For example, in Syria, the right of education to children is also being affected. Millions of children cannot go to school due to the continuous hostilities, the arbitrary attacks against school buildings and their use by armed groups. Approximately one quarter of the more than 4,000 schools in Syria have been damaged, destroyed, or used for other purposes. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, 160 children died during attacks on schools in 2016. It is estimated that there are 1.6 million Syrian children who do not go to school, a figure that will continue to rise with the passage of years and the perpetuation of the conflict (Guha-Sapir, 2016).

Considering that more vulnerable segments of the population were suffering the consequences of the crisis, the Security Council of the United Nations demanded all parties of the conflict to respect international law and abstain from carrying out attacks directed against the civilian population or civilian targets. Nevertheless, reports compiled for the Security Council indicated that the Government of Syria had increased the use of barrel bombs in densely populated civilian areas, including attacks on sanitary facilities, hospitals, schools, markets and refugees' camps. The armed opposition groups are also responsible for carrying out indiscriminate attacks against some of the areas controlled by the Government. In addition, according to the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria of 2017, terrorist groups have committed

suicide bombings using car bombs and whose targets were mainly civilians. Attacks on health facilities and personnel by the different parties are frequent. Annually, on average, there are at least 83 attacks against sanitary facilities. In the last twelve months, more than one million houses have been totally or partially destroyed, and more than a third of the entire water supply infrastructure has been damaged. The water supply has been reduced by at least 50% compared to pre-conflict levels. The consequences have been devastating, and have deepened the humanitarian crisis causing hunger, disease and death (International Commission of Inquiry of Syria , 2017).

This first chapter analyzes, in a post-conflict context, the consequences and challenges of the crisis for the Syrian nation-state. Therefore, it started with the structural analysis, which included the economic, political and social perspectives building the current context in Syria. Thus, the plain structure of the state was presented and showed the first aggravating factors that would explain the crisis. Then, in order to understand the intensity of the conflict, it was necessary to review its characteristics, namely the violence immersed. The research exposed not only the different types of violent acts during the conflict, but also who was responsible for each one of them, which pointed to the State, the civil society and also to the external new agents. In addition, the consequences of the conflict were also measured in order to highlight the great losses, the unmanageable social crisis, the slightly applicable international laws and the breach of humanitarian law. Although all these factors show some type of transgression, they shall be a priority afterwards and, above all, establish the starting point of the amendments to the situation in Syria.

2. CHAPTER II INTERVENTION IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

2.1. Construction of the Syrian idiosyncrasy

As the second chapter of the academic investigation focuses specifically on the actors involved in the Syrian conflict, the following subchapters will distribute said actors according to the different contexts where they come from. In this sense, this first subchapter aims to build the Syrian idiosyncrasy by classifying the actors into the fragments of society in which they belong according to their

origin, beliefs or ideology. This classification is made by recognizing the streams that are influencing the population, thus, the first division presents actors from a multicultural perspective, the second one introduces the actors that emerge from a religious point of view and the last division addresses the actors who defend the segmentation of the Syrian society.

2.1.1. Multicultural influences

The current war in Syria has not only compromised the internal order of the country but is also reconfiguring most of the regional geopolitical disputes. Among the various issues that are being solved in Syria is the future of the Kurdish people. Of Sunni creed and Persian language, the approximately 30 million Kurds live mostly in a region around the borders of Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Historically, this people have fought for the possible creation of an independent Kurdish state in that region. They are well-known for their struggle since they have not stopped claiming their political independence, which has been a constant source of tension with the countries that do not recognize the territorial sovereignty of so-called Kurdistan, especially that of Turkey. In the last three decades, this fight has caused more than 40 thousand deaths and a huge number of displaced individuals. It is a conflict that also increases the tensions of the war in Syria (The Kurdish Project, 2014).

The Kurds of Syria are the largest ethnic minority in the country and represent approximately 7% to 10% of the total population. They inhabit rich agricultural areas, mainly near the borders with Turkey and Iraq, and also near several of Syria's most valuable oil and natural gas fields. Since the 1950s, Kurdish demands for greater political autonomy have been repressed by Syrian governments, through violent measures or through strategic association with certain Kurdish tribal leaders. The rich oil region of Qamishli, in the northeast, was for decades a matter of dispute with the governorate of Damascus, which was constantly confiscating lands with the intention of passing them into the Arabs domain (Chatham House, 2016).

In 2011, when popular revolts began in Syria, the Kurdish majority provinces remained far from the armed confrontations. The decision not to get involved was basically because, although the Kurds have their own fight against

the government, joining the opposition groups would not have any benefit since they were dominated by the Sunni Islamists and this didn't respond to their interests. In the Kurdish view of impassion before the conflict, President al-Assad took it as an opportunity. Therefore, when the crisis began, the president — in his willingness to perpetuate his power and silence the voices demanding his resignation — promised a series of reforms in benefit of the Kurds. One was the granting of Syrian citizenship to 360,000 Kurds whom the Ba'ath Party had never recognized during the 50 years it has ruled. Since then, the leader has only multiplied the gestures of support towards this ethnic group. Mainly, due to the lack of military troops needed to fight the rebels in the strategic cities of Aleppo, Homs or Damascus, the Syrian regime has withdrawn its control of the main northwest cities to the YPG (People's Protection Units) and to the PYD (Democratic Unity Party) (Schott, 2017).

Little by little, the Kurds have been acquiring representation in Syrian politics. That being said, they created another political force to represent their people, the Kurdish Supreme Committee (CSK), which is part of an alliance of 13 Kurdish parties, under the leadership of the PYD. The body was formed in July 2012 as an initiative of the president of the region so-called Kurdistan on the Iraqi side, Masud Barzani, hoping to create a future semi-independent Kurdish zone in northeastern Syria. The al-Assad Army, continuing its strategy to avoid further conflict with the Kurds, withdrew from the area and since then, the Kurdish militias from the PYD and the People's Protection Units had taken control of their areas (International Crisis Group, 2013).

One of the biggest obstacles to find a solution to the conflict in Syria is Kurdish nationalism, forcing actors such as Turkey to make alliances with Al-Qaeda in Syria to contain the ethnic group. Therefore, the Turkish state concentrates its operations in the territories occupied by Kurds like Afrin or Idlib. The truth is that, by 2017, the map of Syria shows the great power acquired by the Kurds, since they occupy most of the northern Syrian territory. The decline of the self-proclaimed Islamic State also favors this ethnic group in terms of occupation. For its part, the Syrian regime, as it manages this group strategically, intends to reach an agreement with the YPG and isolate the rest of the government's opponents (Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2017).

However, according to Barzani's statements, the Kurdish people will not risk being used and later be denied recognition as a Syrian people. For this reason, said leader, despite having approximately 50% support of the Kurdish society and having the main armed militia of the YPG and PYD, is aware that consensus is necessary with the rest of Kurdish political organizations. Therefore, these structures signed the Erbil Pact, to manage the revolution in the Kurdish majority regions, strengthen the struggle for national recognition of the Kurdish people and guarantee their rights in a future Syrian Constitution (Cheterian, 2017). In this sense, the Kurdish population joined forces and found a way to cooperate with each other. Considering that they have been fighting for their independence for years and getting a real representation, the Kurds are not a spontaneous opposition group. On the contrary, they give indications of being a quite organized conglomerate with political representation and with clear objectives.

2.1.2. Religious pressures

The Syrian territory has a highly diverse population from a religious point of view. In spite of the centralizing dynamics of the government, the traditional territorial and community structures have been preserved because the political power has never imposed any rupture between them or encouraged their disappearance. Although 90% of the 22 million Syrians counted in the last census were Arab, there are significant concentrations of Kurds (9% of the population), as well as Armenians, Circassians and Turkmen. Specifically by religious belief, we find the Muslims who represent about 90% of the population, although strongly segmented. There is a Sunni majority (about 74% of Syrians), but also important Shiite minorities such as Alawis (11%), the Druze or the Ismailis (5%). Several Christian Churches have also survived (approximately 10%): the Greek-Orthodox and the Catholic (Alloush, 2017). Given that this religious division has been made, it is important to analyze each of these factions and detail the religious approach motivating their actions.

First, there is the Sunni segment of the Syrian population. Sunnism is the religious belief that constitutes the great majority in the country. About 65% of its faithful are native Syrian Arabs, the rest belong to the Kurdish, Turcoman and Circassian ethnic groups. It is the group that confers the dominant religious

tone and provides the fundamental values of the country. Sunnis are present in almost all economic sectors and in all social classes, both in large cities and in rural areas. Also, an important Sunni bourgeoisie is located in Damascus and Aleppo, which has a great influence on the national economy. Likewise, they inhabit almost all regions of the country. In the Al-Hasakah Governorate, for example, Sunnis remain a majority, but most of them are Kurds and not Arabs. This majority branch of Islam is not a homogeneous and harmonious group, due to the internal differences of the Sunnis based, originally, on their different Islamic schools. The same ones that have been the motivation for the creation of the Islamist and political groups that could even defend extremists-conservative positions, as it is the case of the movements of the Muslim Brotherhood and the jihadism (Middle East Policy Council, 2017).

In second place are the Alawites, who took control of the State and are represented by the Ba'ath party. They constitute the first religious minority in Syria. The creed of this group is the combination of various cults and they are often classified into the branch of Shia Islam. On the other hand, they form an extremely hermetic minority group, due to the enormous difficulty that exists to access knowledge of their practices and rituals, as well as the meeting places of their initiates, which has created an atmosphere of mystery towards them. Another quality is the lack of any proselytizing or expansionist attempts for their faith, and the fact that they do not have mosques or special temples that would expose them. The Alawites are a minority who have been historically discriminated against and left behind by the Sunni majorities that ruled Syria until they established the regime. In fact, the egalitarian ideology of the Alawites, in terms of religion, was an effective principle to align the differences between the various religious communities when founding the political society of Syria according to their beliefs. Although they do not occupy most of the positions in the governmental apparatus, the security and intelligence agencies and the command posts within the Armed Forces are exclusively reserved (Trivedi, 2016).

Moreover, the Druze community corresponds to about 3.3% of the Syrian population and represents the third largest religious minority, concentrated mainly in Jabal al Arab, a region in the southwestern part of the country. As the Kurds, Druze people are often considered a national minority,

as well as a religious minority that is divided between several states: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel. Within the Islamic world, the most orthodox Muslims do not consider them Muslims, even though they defend that their religion is Islamic and they linked their origins with the Shia side. Like other religious minorities, they historically suffered from persecution and oppression by other religious communities. In the last decade, the community developed excellent relations with President Bashar al-Assad, who has occasionally visited local Druze families. They define themselves as the spiritual cousins of the Alawites, which has helped to generate a close relation with the government. In fact, that is one of the main characteristics of the Druze minorities: the loyalty towards the State that identifies them, a fact that explains the political support that the Druzes of Syria have given to the al-Assad government for several decades (al-Assil & Slim, 2015).

Finally there are the Christians of Syria, who constitute about 10% of the Syrian population, being the most important Greek Orthodox community with 55%, followed by Catholicism with 18% among Latinos, Armenians, Maronites, Chaldeans, Melkites and Syrians. The Syrian Christian community is eminently urban. The big cities have relevant Christian neighborhoods, as in Damascus. There are also small populations, being one of the best-known Maalula with about 2000 Syrian citizens professing Christianity. Christians always played a prominent role in the Syrian political scene. In fact, one of the founders of the Ba'ath party was a Greek-Orthodox, who from the first moment, perceived the importance of approaching the rest of the religious communities that might be attracted by the egalitarian and socialist message of the nationalist formation (Gilbert, 2017). However, regarding the Syrian crisis, Christians have not participated that actively as other religious groups, but they have increased the refugees and displaced conglomerates.

2.1.3. Segmentation of the Syrian society

In order to explain the issue of how Syrian society suffered the segmentation that is currently perceived, the actors will be analyzed from a political and, above all, ideological perspective. The two factors that motivate the fragmentation between the two groups are: 1.) the government and 2.) the opposition to the regime. It is important to emphasize that Syrian society has

been under the al-Assad regime for more than 40 years between father and son. Just as the State consolidated itself in power and made the necessary adjustments to its regime to strengthen itself; likewise there have always existed opposition groups to the regime that were involved in the country's politics. Both segments coexisted in the Syrian system, however, since the crisis detonated, the fracture became more acute, forming the political factions currently known.

The first actor subject of this investigation is the government of President Bashar al-Assad, who as representative of the Ba'ath Party, with 97% of the votes and as the only candidate who won the elections, positioned himself since 2000. To explain why the Syrian government and its leader are relevant actors in the conflict, it is necessary to go back to their political context. The president of Syria belongs to the Ba'ath Socialist Party, which arises from anti-western and nationalist logics of the region in which the territory and resources-administration must be defended. This party has a religious approach Shiite and comes from the Alawi minority. Syrian civil society has always harshly criticized the fact that the Ba'ath party, even though representing a minority, assumed power and remained in it imposing its vision of government according to the ideology of the party (The Religious Literacy Project , 2011).

Even with the death of the party leader in 2000, Hafez al-Assad, the party had not lost its political force. When Bashar al-Assad assumed power, the armed forces, the intelligence services, the Ba'ath and the oligarchy showed their loyalty to the regime. In other words, at the moment when the population in Syria expected a transformation of the regime or a total change in it, the most important factions of the government were supporting it and making it stronger, since the regime has full control of the militia and the administrative resources that coerce civil society (Holliday, 2012).

The regime is one of the main actors in the conflict by its very nature. The leader of the Syrian nation and the authorities, through the State, makes decisions and has the resources to execute them. This is how the al-Assad regime has been responsible for persecutions, detentions and torture. Additionally, it has shown its authority and control over issues such as freedom of expression, press and creation of associations. Even more during the crisis in

Syria, the actions of the State have been a constant reminder that they have the legitimate monopoly on the use of force. Thus, the regime has carried out acts of violence not only against those described as rebels or traitors to the government, but also against the civil society, alleging the defense of the nation-state and its sovereignty (Eisenstadt, 2017). Certainly the state with the governance of Bashar al-Assad is an actor that exercises control and that is able to placate the revolts of the civil society through violent mechanisms.

The second relevant actor to study is the opposition of the Syrian regime. The opposition comprises a large group of political actors inside and outside Syria with groups that develop a strictly political roll and others that have armed themselves militarily. Despite their divisions, the opposition groups have a common goal: the fall of al-Assad's regime. However, these do not share an alternative political project since they emerged spontaneously from the 2011 uprisings. The research work will make reference to the most relevant opposition groups. In the following table the groups are presented with the purpose of specifying the creation and objective of each one of them.

TABLE 1
OPPOSITION GROUPS IN SYRIA

Name of the Group	Purpose
National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (NCSROF)	It is a coalition integrating several opposing factions, which is considered as the legitimate opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad and is, therefore, the main opposition group with a voice before the international community. It emerged in November 2012 at a meeting in Doha, when all said factions agreed to join in order to form an inclusive leadership. Thus, the NCSROF includes several groups, such as the Local Coordination Committees (CCL, an organ formed by activists in the field), the Syrian National Council, the Muslim Brotherhood or the Free Syrian Army.

<p>Free Syrian Army (FSA)</p>	<p>It is the military force of the NCSROF and the main armed group among the rebels. At first, government opponents and military deserters integrated it, but little by little it has been confused with the jihadists. The FSA has not stopped committing atrocities, such as shootings of captured militaries and the use of minors as human shields or soldiers with premature training in weapons. The United States and the Arab League finance these rebels and provide them with weapons.</p>
<p>Syrian National Council</p>	<p>It is an alliance of 13 left-wing parties that, while demanding the fall of the Syrian dictatorship and the elimination of Assad as president, firmly reject all kinds of intervention. The Sunni community, which is the majority in Syria and has confronted the regime in many occasions, dominates this council. The Council refuses to go to Geneva and negotiate with the regime of Bashar al-Assad, so it has threatened on numerous occasions to leave the NCSROF.</p>
<p>National Coordinating Committee for Democratic Change</p>	<p>It is an alliance of 16 left-wing political parties, three Kurdish formations, young activists and independent politicians. The CCN, based in Damascus, is open to a political negotiated solution with the regime, although with the prior condition of a ceasefire, the withdrawal of the Army from all the cities and the release of all political prisoners. Its predisposition to agree with al-Assad has made this group the least popular among opposition movements.</p>

Local Coordination Committees	In Arabic ' <i>Tansiqiyat</i> ' is a united organization of activists, whose presence and work is local and regional. They coordinate and organize the citizens' life in some Syrian districts. This movement has become the most cohesive and better organized. It has developed and encouraged the creation of new political structures. The Tansiqiyat have organized protests since the beginning of the conflict and they have also coordinated the action of the military opposition.
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Retrieved from: Middle East Security Report, 2015

Prepared by: Samanta Gomez

This table presents a summary of the main opposition groups involved in the Syrian civil war. While they share the interest of overthrowing the government, they also have particular interests that are dividing them, such as the vision of democracy and Islam that each one has. In addition, external actors that will be analyzed later, who also add their own interests to the situation, support these groups. That is why these groups have not managed to establish agreements to negotiate with the regime, which makes the peace process in Syria more difficult.

2.2. Sources of direct assistance during the conflict

The following subchapter continues to analyze the actors involved in the Syrian conflict, but for the support provided to the local parties. Therefore, the investigation recognizes the presence of external influences. Said influences already have a representative role in the conflict. For that reason, first this subchapter mentions the alliances that the State has established to support and finance its strategy. Then, it is important to consider the counterparties' views; thus, the investigation will also refer to the external actors' performance against the Syrian state system. Finally, since the international community is

undoubtedly involved in the conflict, the visions that international organizations have regarding the situation in Syria will also be exposed.

2.2.1. State establishment and alliances

As the civil war in Syria developed, the international community was taking various positions, analyzing the violent events that were taking place within the territory, especially since chemical weapons were used in Ghouta that produced a shock worldwide. The attacks also encouraged the representatives of several countries to express their rejection against these events. With the commotion they caused on the Syrian state, the regional actors close to the regime were the first to show solidarity with the situation.

As in the case of Iran, this country is the main regional ally for Syria. It is a remarkable actor, which considers Syria a strategic ally. Its historic alliance began in 1979, when they created the Axis of Resistance with Hezbollah, a group that will also be mentioned later. In addition, the strategic importance of Tehran motivates Iran to show military aid and advice to Syria to repress the rebels. For Iran, it is important that Bashar Al-Assad stays in power, since through Syria, Iran can help in the Gaza Strip. In fact, since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Iran has remained firm regarding the 'Axis of Resistance' against Israel, which has also been considered the only official line. At the beginning of the war in Syria, the Iranians limited the supply of services and financial support. As the situation evolved, however, the posture changed since Iran could not allow jihadist militias that had infiltrated into Syrian territory to reach Tehran. Therefore, Iran is collaborating with multilateral initiatives to achieve the establishment of peace and political stability in Syria; thus, preventing Israel from benefiting in the region. Contributions of up to 6,000 million dollars in credits from the Iranian government to the al-Assad government have been recorded, in addition to the 65,000 pro-Iranian troops that had fought in Syria (Kozak, 2017).

Certainly there is an Iranian interest in Syria not only during the conflict, but also in the long term. Iran hopes to obtain its zone of influence within the country, which guarantees its interests. Economic agreements have been made between the two countries, such as the contract signed regarding a new mobile

phone line granted to an Iranian company. Also, Iran intends to exploit the phosphate mines located near Palmyra for a period of 99 years and establish a port in the Mediterranean in order to export Iranian oil through a pipeline of 1,500 kilometers that would cross Iraq and Syria, whose regimes are under Iranian protection. The possible construction of said pipeline would represent a crack for Saudi Arabia, its main regional rival, since it would strengthen the Shiite arc that goes from Tehran to Beirut and would allow Iran to export its oil to the European Union under highly advantageous conditions. Substantial contracts toward the reconstruction of Syria are in the air, from which important Iranian infrastructure companies expect to obtain benefits (Yubero, 2017).

The Syrian-Iranian Alliance allows introducing another actor in the conflict, Hezbollah. The most important political, social and paramilitary organization in Lebanon, of Shia faith, owes much to the governments of Syria and Iran. Hezbollah provides support to Syria by monitoring the fronts with Lebanon, training Syrian paramilitary forces and sending personnel on combat missions. The support of Hezbollah has been fundamental in the struggle for predominantly Shiite areas of the country, especially the population of Homs, where the Hezbollah militias suffered major casualties. The eventual fall of the al-Assad regime, as well as the increase of power of the West or Saudi Arabia in the region, would signify the isolation of Hezbollah, the end of the supply of military and non-war material from Syria and Iran, as well as the reinforcement of the Sunni terrorist groups that operate in Lebanon, who are major enemies of this paramilitary organization (Blanford, 2017).

Following up with the allies to the government of Syria, stands out the participation of the Russian Federation in the conflict. Undoubtedly, the role that Russia has played in Syria has been very important, since it has been able to give advice and assistance in terms of non-interference and on legitimate defense. Russia also pursues economic interests as it is one of the largest suppliers of weapons to Syria, and at the same time has clear and strategic political objectives. With its role as mediator and active actor in the civil war, the Russian government seeks to block the US efforts in the region. Russia, as part of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, has been able to influence the decisions and measures that have been taken against Syria as a result of international pressure. It is also important to mention that

Russia has its naval base in the port of Tartus on the Syrian coasts, which strengthens the military ties as well as the cooperation it could offer at any moment. Syria represents an important ally in the East Middle for Russia; thus, it is interested in maintaining its relationship with the Arab country (Casagrande & Weinberger, 2017).

Russia has chosen to ally with the Shiites in the Middle East and against the Sunnis who are considered a threat to Russia's national security. However, the Russian intervention has deepened the Islamic disagreements among Shiites and Sunnis. As a result of the actions of Russian air forces, many of those killed in the conflict are Sunnis. Russian air forces have also caused severe damage to cities with a Sunni majority, particularly in terms of the social infrastructure, hospitals, schools and civilian homes. Russia fights with the Shiites more intensely also due to the terrorist attacks in recent years. Specifically against the Islamic State, since this group has constantly been threatening and attacking the Russian government. Russia has ordered several bombings in Syria that have been extremely bloody (Shapiro, 2017).

In effect, the use of force by Russia has been guided by concrete interests and not by ideological impulses. The military power used in the Russian strategy is a coercive negotiation that consists of a series of proposals and counterproposals, threats, demands, concessions and establishment of limits, where the parameters between diplomacy and conflict are blurred. In the Syrian case, the main objective of the Russian intervention has been avoiding a military defeat of the government forces that would lead to the collapse of the regime. In addition, the rivalry with the United States was undoubtedly a key factor to enter the war and prevent an American victory that would lead to a new change of regime, as in the case of Ukraine. On the other hand, at the normative level, Putin's administration wished to make clear its defense of a traditional concept of sovereignty and its opposition to new, supposedly humanitarian interventions. Not only by using its veto in the Security Council, but also by applying the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect, Russia settled its presence on the battlefield and prevent a takeover of the al-Assad regime (Sladden & Wasser, 2017).

2.2.2. Participation against the state system

International actors also recognize the strategic implications of the Syrian revolts and have been directly involved in the conflict at different levels, in order to influence in the territory. This analysis in the investigation focuses on the actors that condemn the performance of the administration of President Bashar al-Assad, demonstrating their alliance to the opposition or the so-called rebels.

In the first place is the United States as the most representative actor of the opposition allies. This country has pointed its interests in Syria and has had a great participation and intervention in the conflict, mainly due to Arab country's strategic position, as well as its abundant oil resources. As in the case of Russia, the United States intervention became more intense after the chemical attacks. The President at that time, Barack Obama, immediately condemned the attacks and the violation of human rights in Syria. Consequently, the government of the United States accused the Syrian government of being responsible for the attack with chemical weapons. Criticism continued against the al-Assad regime and the opposition sought an alliance establishment with the United States. The alliance was about supporting each other through a military intervention in the Syrian territory, as has been done before by the US on other occasions in several countries of the region (Humud & Blanchard, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the participation of the United States since the beginning of this conflict has been unrestricted, since this country has tried to take control and manage the conflict to its benefit. But despite its efforts, the US has not been able to accomplish its objectives of democratization in Syria as it did in countries, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Tunisia. The United States tried to isolate the Syrian regime through various types of unilateral measures, for example, a set of sanctions that included the reduction of exports, freezing of assets and sanctions against high officials. After demanding al-Assad to leave power, The United States announced in 2012 the postponement of diplomatic relations with Syria. The promise of US aid increased to 6,000 million dollars today. This support includes the implementation of new assistance programs for the rebels through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), light weapons, training

in Jordan, logistics and intelligence (Ekman, 2017). For the United States, obtaining control of Syria is key to achieving regional stability, ensuring the definitive territoriality of Israel, reducing terrorist threats and containing the Shiites. The US has acted under a foreign policy of global domination in Syria.

In addition, within the allies is also Turkey. This country considers that the only way in which the civil war in Syria can be solved is by a change of the regime, since the administration of Bashar Al-Assad did not accomplish the list of important democratic reforms in order to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. When Turkey noticed the increase of violence in Syria, like the US, it demanded Bashar Al-Assad to withdraw its presidency and at the same time applied economic sanctions to Syria. The Turkish government allowed the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the political opposition of the Al-Assad administration to operate from its territory, which increased tensions between both countries. Syria threatened to attack Turkey many times, but the country always counted with the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to deal with the menaces. Turkey reaffirmed its support for the United States of America and demonstrated it by letting the US deploy missiles from the southern part of Turkey. In addition, the Turkish government provides military and political aid to the Syrian opposition, in an attempt to unify the opposition so that it would be easier to overthrow President Bashar Al-Assad. However, such unification has not been possible yet, so the country decided to extend its strategy and began supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and the Sunni extremists groups (D'Alema, 2017).

The position that Turkey had before this civil war is conditioned by several factors. Among them are the Syrian refugees located along the border between Iraq and Turkey. Another factor is the Kurdish control of part of the Syrian territory that is bordering Turkey, which is considered a political threat. The Syrian crisis, along with the Turkish government's performance in it, has also caused a division between the Turkish populations between the parts of the society who support the military intervention of the United States in Syria and the other part that does not agree, due to their conservative Sunni agenda. Hence, the influential action that Turkey intended to perform was limited by these variables, since the Turkish government could have never foreseen that its strategy was going to cause distress within its population (Stein, 2017).

On the other hand is the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This country is in favor of a change of the regime in Syria, since its objective is to minimize the influence that Iran has in the Middle East region. In effect, if Bashar continues in power, Iran could be strengthened in its position of power within that region. Thus, Arabia is supporting the Syrian rebels with money and arms. The country is one of the main financiers and suppliers of weapons to several rebel groups against the al-Assad regime, the country has intervened in Syria with as much interest as Qatar, even surpassing it as an investor. With its support for the rebels, Saudi Arabia pursues not only its traditional policy of establishing itself as the defender of the Sunnis, but also weakening Iran, the Shia power, and the Muslim Brotherhood, the most powerful Sunni brotherhood, with ramifications all over the Islamic world (Rydell, 2017).

Lastly, an actor to consider within the allies is Qatar, which is another defender of the rebels providing weapons and, of course, political support. Since the beginning of the conflict, Qatar has preferred a political solution to the war. Its strategy has been to join the countries and the rebel groups against the al-Assad regime, condemning the brutality of the attacks over the population. However, the purpose of Qatar — beyond protecting and uniting Syria under Sunni Islam — is to strengthen its influence in a hypothetical post-Assad era. In this sense, the government in Qatar decided to withdraw the Syrian Ambassador from the country, re-armed its support for the opposition and, therefore, was in favor of an Arab military intervention. Currently, Qatar continues to support financially and militarily not only the Syrian rebels, but also the jihadist groups in Syria (Phillips, 2017).

2.2.3. International community's view

As the countries established their accusations and declarations unilaterally, international and regional organizations have also pronounced against human rights violations in Syria in a multilateral manner, such as in the case of the United Nations (UN), the League Arab, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Thus, in this section, the various actions and the different positions of these organizations will be analyzed regarding the situation in Syria. In this way, it will be possible to determine the

type of political and strategic interests that these organizations have within the conflict.

Concerning the United Nations Organization, criticisms are frequent for its inaction in the Syrian conflict. Indeed, until now the Security Council has been unable to take effective measures to prevent the aggravation of the situation and to promote a solution to stop the violence and the severe violations of human rights. However, its organisms, such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Secretary General, are maintaining a very active position. At the same time, the case of Syria is serving to strengthen relations between the UN and the League of Arab States. The action of the Security Council has awakened several interrogations, since compared with its performance in Libya, its current conduct is on the contrary, passive.

The case of Syria is a clear example of the subordination of the Council to the geostrategic demands of the members, despite facing a humanitarian crisis, resulting in ferocious repression and a large the number of victims. For years since the crisis began, disagreement among its permanent members was preventing the adoption of resolutions. For instance, one of the first attempts of addressing the Syrian conflict was a draft Resolution presented in 2011, sponsored by Germany, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom, in which, after condemning the serious and systematic violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians, it commanded the Syrian authorities to immediately put an end to such a situation. However, the project was vetoed by Russia and China. In the face of the blockade in the adoption of the resolution, other permanent members expressed their disappointment, stating that the Council did not fulfill its responsibilities stated in the Charter of the United Nations in relation to the maintenance of international peace and security (The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect , 2011).

In the years to follow, more draft resolutions were presented based on Chapter VII of the Charter on Action in the Case of Threats to Peace, Violations of Peace or Acts of Aggression. These already included sanctions and deadlines for the Syrian State to comply with its ceasefire commitments before taking action, in particular, resolutions 2042 and 2043. However, each attempt

of resolution clashed with the votes from Russia and China. In addition, it should be noted that for the other UN organisms, in particular the General Assembly, the case of Syria is providing unique lessons to consider issues, such as the maintenance of international peace and security. This plenary body condemns the situation and urges the Syrian authorities to comply with the resolutions of the Human Rights Council. In addition, its draft resolutions are based on the end of violence, the liberation of the arbitrarily detained civilians, the withdrawal of the armed forces from the districts, respect for freedom of expression and full access in Syria of international organizations and media (United Nations General Assembly, 2017).

Additionally, as already mentioned, the Arab League has also had a representative role and has stated its position about the situation in Syria. This is an organization that brings together the Arab States of the Middle East and the Maghreb, whose main objective is to serve the common good in order to ensure better conditions, guarantee the future and fulfill the wishes and expectations of all Arab countries. The Arab international body has developed a policy markedly contrary to the al-Assad regime. It has been a very active actor in the development of the Syrian civil war, despite the internal differences that have arisen, since each member country has its own vision to seek a solution to the crisis in the Syrian territory. It is worth mentioning that Syria is a member of this organization, so the problems that occur in this country concern the whole league. One of the first actions carried out by this regional body was the temporary suspension of Syria until the violence ceased. With this action, the Arab League intended to exert pressure on the Syrian State to search for a viable solution to the conflict (Middle East Policy Council , 2016).

Among the political measures adopted by the League was the agreement on the withdrawal of the Arab Ambassadors from the Syrian territory, although this measure was taken as a sovereign decision of each country. Likewise, the Arab League committed itself to provide protection and assistance to the civilian population in coordination with the United Nations. The disagreement regarding the repression and the violent acts that have been perpetrated in Syria is precisely the reason why this organization provides humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict. The League has supported all the proposals against the regime, condemning the attacks with chemical

weapons attributing them exclusively to the Government, and even the organism has requested actions of direct intervention by the United States and other member states of the UN (Middle East Observer , 2017).

Another international actor in the Syrian conflict is the European Union. This is an economic and political association composed of 28 European countries. Since the events that took place after the Arab Spring in March 2011, the European Union has taken different initiatives and actions addressed to restore peace in the Middle East region. This organism has encouraged the parties in conflict of the Syrian civil war to stop the violence and to end the confrontations between them. Strategically, the European Union has tried to exert pressure to stop the fighting and attacks between the government of Basar Al-Assad and the opposition, which has put pressure on the regime with a variety of sanctions, including embargoes (Gaub, 2017).

In addition, it can be noted the light participation that the European Union has had in military aspects, since it seems that each member country has a different reaction in terms of security and defense. However, this organism faces one of the collateral effects of the conflict in Syria — the refugee crisis. By 2015, many emigrants began to arrive massively to the European territory. At first, the countries received them openly. Nevertheless, this led to internal protests, the resurgence of a xenophobic populism of the extreme right, as well as constant attacks against the refugee centers. Therefore, the possibility of regulating and controlling the process of granting asylum has been studied, but the truth is that, for the exception of Austria, Germany and Sweden, the EU member States are not complying with their commitment of distribution of refugees (European External Action Service, 2017).

Finally, it is important to review the participation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). For its part, NATO characterized by proclaiming non-participation in the Syrian conflict, however after the chemical attacks, the organization declared that it could intervene in case Turkey was threatened. Despite supporting initiatives and peace proposals issued by organizations such as the UN and the Arab League, NATO specifically rejected a possible joint participation to ease the crisis affecting the Syrian State. Nevertheless, months after confirming that the agency did not intend to intervene in the

conflict, NATO carried out a missile deployment on the border between Syria and Turkey (Garriaud-Maylam, *The war in Syria and Iraq: Humanitarian Aspects*, 2017).

The missiles were deployed following the formal request made by Turkey to the organization in order to protect its borders from a possible Syrian attack. The members of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of NATO approved this request. Likewise, the statements that were exposed in the WikiLeaks publications affirmed that NATO leads the coup d'état of the Syrian Republic. It is also presumed that the Organization is carrying out tasks of recognition and training of the Syrian rebel groups (WikiLeaks, 2012). In the end, it can be determined that NATO has tried to maintain an image of non-participation in the conflict. Nevertheless, that image has been downgraded, since its intervention has been evident.

2.3. External agents' performance

In this subchapter of the academic investigation new actors will be introduced to the Syrian crisis formula. This time from a more indirect approach, since these actors' actions pursue strictly economic or social matters in the conflict. Thus, their performance is important even though their actions are not constantly in the breaking news. In this sense, the subchapter mentions the role of the private sector in Syria and their contributions to the conflict. Then, it is important to study the transversal economic actors in the conflict, in order to understand the origins of the financial assistance. Finally, the social causes are also worth mentioning, due to the fact that there are actors that have directed all their human resources and budget to support the Syrian population.

2.3.1. Role of the private sector

The private sector has always played a very important role in Syria, given that, as in many countries, this sector has the power to influence the decisions of the state. Syria is no exception. During the more than 40 years of the al-Assad regimes, the private sector has always been somehow benefited. In this sense the state policies and reforms, far from benefiting the entire population, give priority to the sector that produces economically favorable

results to the state. In this analysis, a description is made regarding how the private sector and elite groups in Syria have been managed in partnership with the country's administration.

The Arab Republic of Syria, from the Hafez al-Assad regime, has already implemented several decrees with measures to deregulate its centralized planned economy. Within the framework of a policy to stimulate the private sector, key state sectors, such as electricity, cement production and the pharmaceutical industry, were opened to private capital. The decrees, in addition, favored and supported private national and foreign investments in areas that have been monopolized traditionally by the public sector; such is the case of the pharmaceutical industry, agriculture, food production, hotels and transport. These measures encouraged the hybrid bourgeoisie that is handled in Syria, arising from the merger of the state bureaucracy with the private bourgeoisie (The Stanley Foundation, 2007). It is important to emphasize that these segments of the population manage and coexist within a framework, which includes representatives of both the Alawi ruling party and its eternal opponents, the Sunni elites.

When Bashar al-Assad assumed the presidency, he also continued to implement measures that favored the private sector, such as the establishment of private banking. This allowed the development of the financial sector, because the first private banks were created with both Syrian and Gulf oil monarchies, as well as insurance companies, the Damascus Stock Exchange and regular exchange houses. Additionally, a private radio station was enabled under the State's conditions to transmit only music and no political content (Aita, 2008). This is yet just another example of how the administration has favored the private sector and has remained deeply involved is the case of Rami Makhlouf.

Mr. Makhlouf is son of the former commander of the Syrian Republican Guard and first-degree cousin of Bashar al-Assad. His economic empire covers a broad spectrum, from telecommunications, through oil and gasoline, to the construction sector, banks, airlines and retail. Thus, when the Syrian state assigned contracts to private companies for the amount of areas in which the capital of this influential representative of the elites manages, they were

awarded to one of his companies or, at least, the enterprises had more possibilities of doing so. In addition, he owns the only duty-free sales chain that Syria has. Its patrimony even includes several private schools, where the children of the ruling families and the Syrian bourgeoisie are educated. The personal wealth of Rami Makhlouf is estimated at approximately 6,000 million dollars. For the rest, in early 2011, the British magazine World Finance praised him as a visionary, which would have greatly encouraged the Syrian economy (Thomas, 2014).

This is how in Syria the public sector has been undermined for years, with the private sector dominating the economy by reaching a share of almost 70%. As the administration was being favored with this economical structure, despite the corruption accusations, the capitalist reforms of the al-Assad regime have fostered a policy that has been essentially aimed at attracting foreign direct investment. Indeed, the economic reports before the crisis started in Syria showed the growth of foreign direct investment from 120 million dollars in 2002 to 3,500 million dollars for 2011 (Census and Economic Information Center, 2011).

Therefore, when the crisis began, it was not a surprise that the private sector also wanted to get involved and take the situation as an opportunity. In areas such as education, for example, the participation of the private sector has become increasingly attractive to a large part of investors in the international community. Regarding the context of the crisis in Syria, in which the Middle East public education systems struggle on how to serve the growing refugee population, certain prestigious companies such as Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, Hewlett-Packard, Pearson Education, LinkedIn, Google and McKinsey & Company, have assumed subsidy commitments, have projected new initiatives and have established partnership agreements to promote the cause of providing a dignifying education to refugee children and teenagers coming from Syria (Al-Hessan, 2017).

At first sight, their role and that of other agents of the private sector seem admirable. Given the concern about the education of refugees that some prominent academics express, it is possible that companies can help address the deep gaps in terms of education that emerged along with the war in Syria.

However, there are several critics around these initiatives, which affirm that the participation of the private sector can deteriorate public education systems, undermining the State's responsibility. However, considering the situation that the Arab country must face, any attempt of aid is important for the country's future. The provision of technology related to education is a significant way of exemplifying the investors' engagement, since the companies have equipped the schools with portable Wi-Fi hubs. Online courses have also been implemented, as well as digital online learning platforms, tablets and mobile phones, and have even guided the elaboration of new operating systems (Menashy & Zakharia, 2017). In this sense, while some agents in the private sector express humanitarian objectives, others' motivation is due to developing trademark loyalty and forming markets.

2.3.2. Transversal economic aid actors in the conflict

It is no secret that the Syrian war is not only developing on the battlefield between the regime and the opposition. In the international context, the conflict is also indirectly expanding through the various alliances that have been formed, and are deployed in support of the Syrian revolution, or in favor of President Bashar al-Assad. In the framework of the civil war, a competition has begun between the regional actors and the great powers that are openly supporting the two parties in conflict. At the same time, said actors are trying to increase their influence in the Middle East, but with special emphasis in Syria due to its geostrategic position in the Arab region.

China is undoubtedly a great ally of Syria; therefore, it wishes to maintain its influence in that country. It is important to highlight that China is a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations Organization, thus in many occasions this country has limited the actions that other countries want to carry out, with its veto power and vice versa. Regarding the situation in Syria, China has expressed its concern, insisting that this problem is internal so the interest that the parties in conflict show to solve their discrepancies is what will really improve the situation in the country. China demanded the Syrian authorities to cease violent acts that are affecting the population as soon as possible. China's objective is to preserve its economic interests in Syria and to avoid a regional escalation of the conflict. Its strategic preferences are focused

directly on the Asiatic continent with several nations under its influence already. However, the country aims to expand these zones to the Middle East. Thus, China is expanding economic ties and strengthening diplomatic relations with those countries that have the necessary natural resources (Danish Institute for International Studies , 2016).

China also has important commercial interests with Syria. According to the European Commission, it is the third largest importer in Syria with contracts worth for more than \$ 2 billion dollars. Syria, on the other hand, assigns only 1% of its total exports to China, thus the Arab country does not exercise as much influence as the great power. Nevertheless, it remains a crucial point for Chinese trade in the Middle East. Additionally, the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) is a joint venture with the Syrian National Oil Company. From the ideological point of view, China has the support of Syria, which has always expressed in favor of the People's Republic of China on issues such as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights (Shichor & William, 2015).

China is present in the geopolitical game of the Middle East, unlike Russia; China cannot intervene directly in Syria. Considering that there are two powers in dispute in the Syrian conflict, such as the United States and Russia, China's influence on the crisis comes from another point of view since this third power does not intend in any way to create discrepancies with its commercial partners. This demonstrates that the economic matter is a priority in the foreign policy of China, thus it prefers to have a low profile in this type of conflicts or exploit its benefits in a silent way.

Another very important factor is the development of relations between China and Russia, which have strengthened their alliance with the years, thanks to the Syrian issue. These two countries have signed an agreement to increase their trade to 200 million US dollars by 2020. In the presence of the two heads of state, 12 agreements have been signed, including the creation of a common investment fund worth for \$4 billion dollars. As two of the few countries that can have a great influence internationally, the two presidents maintain frequent meetings to discuss the issues that disturb the world order and; thus, have expressed their refusal to any foreign intervention in Syria (Kaczmarek, 2016).

In addition, the Chinese development and potential grow at great speed, taking giant steps as expected from this economic power. In parallel with the economic rise, it continues to modernize its armed forces, significantly increasing the budget of expenses, thus becoming a remarkable representativeness worldwide. Indeed, China plans to deploy troops to Syria to support forces in favor to the Syrian President Bashar Assad. Nevertheless, the Chinese interests are economic, not military. While military aid would arrive in order to strengthen the defense front of the regime, China plans to invest 2 billion dollars in the construction of an industrial park in Syria that will accommodate 150 Chinese companies. The project is currently being discussed between the Government of Syria and the country's Embassy in China. The Syrian ambassador in Beijing has assured that the Asian country, Russia and Iran will have priority when carrying out economic projects in Syria (Elazar, *Moving Westward: The Chinese Rebuilding of Syria*, 2017).

The Chinese authorities have spoken out about the crisis in Syria, affirming that the situation has moved to a new stage that requires adopting measures of a political nature and that every effort should be made to fight against terrorism, to dialogue and to restore the economy. China aims to become a key player in the reconstruction of Syria and provide humanitarian aid. That is why the Asian country allocated 29.2 million dollars to help the Syrian refugees (Lin, 2017). In addition, the Chinese government intends to reaffirm itself as a leading actor in international diplomacy, not only in Syria, but also in the Middle East. Increasing efforts that ultimately positively influence the Chinese economic activity. However, the only obstacle for the inversions to begin is the end of the Syrian War and the solution of the problems with the armed opposition.

2.3.3. Sources of humanitarian cooperation

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, various academics have analyzed the struggle for power between the al-Assad regime, the different opposition groups and the external actors involved in the conflict. However, there exists minimum information about the situation faced by thousands of human rights defenders who carry out a complex job on a daily basis, often in

clandestine conditions and without institutional support to protect them. As in other Middle Eastern countries, the space for the autonomy of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Syria is extremely limited. In fact, the Syrian State has resorted to various control mechanisms to repress organizations, such as bans on fundraising, attacks on freedom of expression and the denial of licenses and registrations. When the popular revolts started in March 2011, the environment in which NGOs in Syria performed their activities became even more precarious. However, the civil society showed at the same time an extraordinary increase in the vigor and organizational capacity. The number of human rights NGOs multiplied and many of these organizations were formed to express the legitimate demands of dignity, freedom and equal rights, which were denied for decades by the al-Assad regime (Alzoubi, 2015).

Many of the human rights activists that emerged during this period were already part of the ranks of political activists repressed by the regime years ago. At the same time, a small group of dissenting intellectuals demanded the regime for political liberalization and democratic opening. These personalities encouraged the creation of discussion forums and human rights defense organizations. The powerful influences of the so-called Arab Spring impacted and remained in Syria, which also marked a turning point in the organization of civil society, encouraging the citizens to articulate different human rights organizations in the country. Faced with the absence of a united opposition and all the violence perceived, these groups of intellectuals and dissidents took the lead and, above all, demonstrated their peaceful way of demanding the end of authoritarianism (Bosman, 2012).

Human rights NGOs in Syria find their motivation and build their strategies around different areas, such as documentation and denunciation, incidence, search for access to accountability mechanisms, search for access to an independent and fair trial, and training and education on human rights issues. There are many cases when non-governmental organizations have committed to defend any cause in these areas. For example, members of various NGOs including the Damascus Center for the Study of Human Rights, The Syrian Network for Human Rights and The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, have documented the violations and abuses committed by the al-Assad

regime and by the armed rebels in an extremely hostile scenario with limited resources and often risking their lives (USAID, 2017). The importance of these reports is that by adhering to strict international standards, once compared with other sources of information, they have the potential to become evidence for future transitional justice processes. In fact, The Syrian Network for Human Rights is already considered one of the main sources of information and reference for analytical and statistical studies of the United Nations.

One of the leading NGOs in documenting activities has been Violations Documentation Center in Syria (VDC). Since its creation in 2011, the VDC has assumed the responsibility of compiling the names of the people killed, detained, disappeared or kidnapped in the framework of the revolution. However, the risks for these organizations are latent, and it is presumed that in 2013, a jihadist group participated in the kidnapping of the leader of VDC, along with another three of his colleagues in the organization's offices in Douma. The "four of Douma" have remained missing. These types of events result in mobilizing to an even great degree the international human rights organizations. The International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) affirmed that the kidnaps are part of the strategy sponsored by the regime's forces and non-state actors for threats and harassment, because they seek to prevent human rights defenders from exposing the abuses that the parties are committing (Ghazzawi & Mohammad, 2013).

On the other hand, some NGOs carry out activities to influence the institutions of the United Nations Organization. The Damascus Center for the Study of Human Rights, for example, had an impact and an active participation from the beginning of the civil war on the Human Rights Council. The organization insisted for support in the establishment and funding of the International Commission of Independent Investigation on Syria, which has the purpose of investigating violations of human rights and subsequently bringing those responsible to justice. Since its creation, this commission has become another reliable source of information, and even more so since it has been endorsed by the United Nations (United Nations Office at Geneva, 2017).

In the framework of the UN, there exist other organizations like the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) dedicated to

providing assistance to one of the most vulnerable sectors of the population — children. However, during the conflict in Syria, in some areas the distribution of humanitarian aid continues to be denied and in others it continues to be extremely difficult due to the constant attacks, poor security, limited movement and the imposition of restrictions. Denying humanitarian access deprives children of food, medical care, education and protection. Therefore, UNICEF has focused its objectives on attending needs, preserving lives and assuring a future for the Syrian children (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2017).

It is true that the conflict has not ended yet, however the above-mentioned organizations are setting the path to move towards a resolution. The population started to settle by going back to their homes, to their schools and to reopening their businesses. However, the role played by international aid and, specifically, NGOs, is extremely relevant in the process. Their efforts are helping citizens to establish themselves, to build their strength and to start a decent life. Although the losses are immeasurable and each of these citizens has suffered the war in different ways, the NGOs act as a kind of shelter in such a prolonged crisis.

To conclude, the second chapter of this academic investigation set as its objective to determine the influence and impact of every actor that intervened directly or indirectly in the conflict. Therefore, it started at a local level reflecting the Syrian idiosyncrasy. An important division was made in order to classify the society by its most influential segments, thus the investigation reviewed the multicultural influences, the religious pressures and finally the parties involved in the segmentation of the Syrian society. The analysis of the actors continued by exposing the sources of direct assistance during the conflict. This aid is understood as the external intervention perceived within the conflict in Syria and, therefore, the research identified the alliances established by the State, the international participation against the regime and the views from the International Community. Finally, the actors' tracking revealed those external agents that also perform within the situation in Syria, but in an indirect way. Therefore, it was important to mention the role of the private sector nationally and internationally, the aid provided by transversal economic actors in the

conflict (as in the case of China) and, finally, highlight the activity of the sources of humanitarian cooperation.

3. CHAPTER III RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SYRIAN NATION-STATE

3.1. Immediate attention requirements post-conflict

The theme of this academic investigation points towards a futuristic approach where all the evidence gathered can create a framework for a possible scenario for the Syrian state in 2021. Specifically, this last chapter exhibits the researcher's reconstruction proposal of the nation-state. Thus, the first subchapter of the research mainly concentrates on the aspects that require immediate attention within the crisis, since the purpose is to start visualizing a post-conflict context. Therefore, it starts by mentioning the actions that have been taken regarding the rehabilitation of damages and victims. Then, it identifies the first attempts of state reconstruction in a local level, specifically referring to social or political improvements. Finally, at this point of the conflict this subchapter considers important to review the actors' agendas by detailing where are they standing and what are their plans regarding their presence in Syria.

3.1.1. Rehabilitation of internal and external victims

By the end of 2017, the Syrian conflict was facing its seventh year with a large number of victims and a country nearly in ruins. It is common that in this type of situations, the questioning moves around 'what' and 'how' to handle the victims and the damages that result from an armed conflict. Considering that, the conflict was not giving signs of closure any time soon, at a local and an international level the concern revolved around where to gather more funds for those Syrians in need of humanitarian aid inside and outside the country. It is important to highlight that more than a mere form of altruism, humanitarian aid plans are part of the first attempts to cooperate positively to the situation, focusing solely on helping and not on satisfying individual interests.

The United Nations as the organism in-charged of spreading globally peace initiatives and human's rights preservation, took the first steps and

addressed the issue of the victims of the Syrian conflict. Joining efforts with other development and humanitarian agencies, the UN has requested almost US\$ 8 billion in new vital funds to help millions of people in Syria and throughout the region. The first part of the request consists on the Regional Plan for Refugees and Resilience (3RP) for 2018-2019, led by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which asks for 4.4 billion dollars to support more than 5 million refugees in the countries near Syria and more than four million in the communities that host them. The second part of the request is the Humanitarian Response Plan for Syria of 2017, which seeks almost \$ 3.2 billion to provide humanitarian support and protection to 13.5 million people that stayed in Syria (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017).

These types of plans intend to push the international community to participate and collaborate with humanitarian causes, however it is up to each member or each specialized agency to decide whether to adhere itself or not, and if so to determine the amount of support. It is true that, sometimes the initiatives aim to address many aspects at the same time, but for the case of Syria any initiative to rehabilitate the victims of the conflict, must certainly be focused on the three segments of the population now recognized: refugees, the people who decided to stay and confront the conflict from their homes and those who decided to return. Thus, until the budget of the humanitarian plans is approved and with the progressive increase in the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, the UNHCR have begun to intensify their operational capacity within Syria. The objective is to expand the humanitarian response for these habitants, provide protection services, improve and create more shelters and assist in the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures and essential services (United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

The questions about the handling of the victims of the Syrian conflict also fall on the countries where these individuals have sought or are still waiting for refugee´ status, especially in the case of Europe. Several European countries have spoken and acted in a positive way to provide support to refugees. For example, the case of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (SICAD), which is responsible for the management and execution of the official humanitarian action of Spain. Following then

humanitarian principles, this agency created the so-called Humanitarian Strategy 2018-2019 Syria and Iraq, which consists on allocating at least 20% of its initial annual total budget specifically in this two regions. The SICAD established strategic objectives for these crises such as, to increase the respect and application of International Humanitarian Law and to provide a humanitarian response supporting medical provisions to populations in need (AECID, 2017). In fact, the case of Spain through this agency is one of the few and most stable proposals coming from Europe, since it explicitly details what is to be achieved and how the aid will be managed.

Unlike the rest of European countries, whose involvement has remained unfocused and purely administrative, minimizing it only to focus on the migration issue and border control. In the case of Germany, in 2017 allowed the entry of 1.3 million refugees and maintained a waiting list for the approval of asylum for 350,000 people, however the government did not have a contingency plan and sufficient resources to meet their commitments of social integration of the people who entered the country. Likewise, Sweden decided to accept 100,000 refugees annually, but did not predict the discontent of its population and the attacks to the shelters that were unleashed later. Countries like France have been more cautious, since by decree they decided to accept only 6,000 refugees annually, a decision that had a lot to do with the number of terrorist attacks that the country suffered. The United Kingdom's case is also similar because it will accept only 20,000 distributed for five years (European Parliament, 2017).

Apart from the European case, there are disproportionate cases that are almost forced to receive refugees because of the proximity they have to the conflict. As is the case of Lebanon that has five million habitants, but receives more than two million Syrians. On the other hand, there are countries that have conditioned this kind of annual quota for Syrian refugees. The United States, for example, has tried to ignore the conflict by accepting 1,500 refugees from Syria. This wave of refugees also arrives in Latin America, and countries such as Brazil and Argentina create humanitarian visa programs for people fleeing the Syrian conflict (Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy., 2017). The truth is that, the acceptance of Syrian refugees is an issue that afflicts the

international community and presses them to take actions on this matter, since if there is not a prompt solution the waves of refugees will only increase.

3.1.2. First attempts of state restructuring

Another important motivation for the reconstruction of the nation-state is the willingness of its own government to do so. However, it is not a change that happens immediately. The State has to give signs that the solution is among its closest agenda through projects or action plans. In fact, the Syrian State, as we have noticed along the investigation, under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad has been an active actor during the conflict, which has sought ways to maintain its relevance, protect the positions of power, and create alliances of cooperation during and after the conflict. With this vision, it can be determined then that the interest of the Syrian government is to recover the stability of the state. Thus, it is necessary to mention if in some way the regime has begun to act in accordance with its objectives.

By the end of 2017, World Vision International¹, thanks to the collaboration of experts from Frontier Economics², published the economic projections report for Syria. The report emphasized that the cost of the conflict is now estimated at 275 billion dollars in lost growth opportunities, and if the conflict continues until 2020, the cost of the conflict will be 1.3 trillion dollars. Conscious of this report and especially of the losses caused by the crisis, the ministerial cabinet of Syria announced that the government is strong enough to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by the attacks of terrorist groups. The state will focus its reconstruction strategy through development and investment plans in order to improve the conditions of the citizens, throughout all the territory but with special emphasis in the now considered war zones. Then, to start loans were approved to investors in real estate areas (World Vision International, 2017).

Moreover, to continue with the reform processes, the government of Bashar al-Assad understood that in order to succeed, it is necessary to adapt

¹ World Vision International is a Christian international organization, specialized in humanitarian aid. Retrieved from: <https://www.wvi.org/about-world-vision>

² Frontier Economics is a global microeconomics enterprise that provides economic consultancy to the public and private sector. Retrieved from: <http://www.frontier-economics.com/about-us/>

the development policies to the economic reality. Even more considering Syria's conflictive context, those policies are essential to face the current crisis. Thus, the regime concluded that the development funds must be used to mobilize the private sector as the engine of economic growth and development. By statements of the Minister of Industry of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ahmed Hamo, in 2017 more than 5.000 companies resumed their activities in Syria after the advances of the Syrian Army in the fight against terrorists. Currently, more than 11,400 that are working in the territory, compared to 6,000 that worked at the beginning of the year. The public sector enterprises are also recovering, the sanitary ware factory and the fusion furnace plant in Hama restarted their activities, as well as the sugar refinery in Homs, among other companies (Lund, 2017). Indeed, the re-opening of all those enterprises is a result of the governmental decisions that aim to create a solution from the inside of the administration, rather than letting the external context to simply absorb the flows of refugees, which is not easing the real problem.

In addition, in December 2017, a forum was held in Damascus to expose the investment opportunities and facilities offered by the government for the reconstruction stage. Under the sponsorship of the Ministries of Economy and Foreign Trade, Tourism and Development, the so-called 'Entrepreneurs' Forum' was opened with a broad participation of Syrian and foreign businessmen. This event was an opportunity in which the Syrian Government offers strategic projects for the reconstruction phase, and seeks to create partnerships with entrepreneurs (Haj-Omar, 2017). With this type of initiatives, the regime not only recognizes the importance of investments in the processes of restoring the state, but also accepts that it needs the other actors of civil society to achieve it. Although the government of Bashar al-Assad has not reached a consensus with the opposition regarding the form of government yet and has left the political reforms for later; certainly, it has managed to attack the economic aspect strategically with positive projects as a first step.

In addition, expert analysts and advisers from the Syrian government estimate that Syria will successfully overcome the reconstruction phase thanks to the support of its allies; Russia, Iran, China and Iraq. In this way, it is believed that the reconstruction of the state will not be dependent on the

payment systems based on the dollar or the euro. The Syrian regime has shown extraordinary resistance with the help of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah; therefore, the government would certainly not agree with giving in to the proposals for cooperation from the West and its financial systems. These same experts point out that Syria should take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization in its reconstruction and more so, taking into account that the international financial institutions, controlled by the United States, will not lend their support to Syria (Asseburg & Oweis, 2017). The country will then have to look for flexible and imaginative solutions in this phase of the reconstruction to attract funds and channel all the efforts in that direction. Fortunately, the allied countries of Syria are also great powers that have plenty monetary resources to carry out investments of this type.

3.1.3. Review of the external actors' agenda

Six years have passed since the crisis began in Syria and considering the number of actors that over the years were added to the conflict, this segment of the research seeks to resume the positions of these actors by the end of 2017. Certainly, their postures cannot be the same with the time elapsed and the participation they have had. Thus, it is important to evaluate which are their objectives and motivations at this point of the conflict, considering that now the war scenario requires a different approach. There is nothing new in the fact that each one pursued individual interests within the conflict as previously explained in the investigation; therefore, it is relevant to mention if the visions of these actors changed or not with time.

Certainly, one of the actors worth to be mentioned first is Russia, since the war in Syria has returned this country its role as a world's superpower. When Russia made the decision to intervene in Syria, Bashar al-Assad had lost control of more than two-thirds of his country's territory. The initial idea was to show that Russia was willing to use its forces to help eliminate terrorism; but in practice Russia saved the government of Bashar al-Assad by helping him not lose control of the government. Proof of this is that, on November 2017, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, in official statements during one of the many meetings that the leaders of these two nations had, assured that the Syrian Army already controlled 98% of the country (Trenin, 2017). There is no doubt

that the Russian leader will use this achievement in depth to continue latent in the Syrian territory and in the post-conflict context, since this also means that Russia will get involved in the political settlement that Syria needs. Certainly, its influence will not allow deviating the ideological lines that both governments and its allies, such as Iran, share. This encourages forming a political coalition even stronger in the region.

On the other hand, there are other actors who have fully revalued their participation in the Syrian conflict. It is the case of Turkey, which for December 2017 by official statements of the chancellor announced that his government no longer sees Syria as a real threat. Furthermore, it was assured that the Turkish government is not against the idea of the Kurds participating in the solution of the Syrian conflict, even though for the last 6 years the Turkish regime cataloged them as a threat and attacked them on countless occasions (Hasan, 2017). Also with Turkey's declarations it was denoted how its government finally yields to the hegemony marked by Russia, and opens up to the dialogue, even when that positions it against the United States. At the moment Turkey, is added to the countries that handle a speech of fight against terrorism as its reason of permanence in the conflict, as also do Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, and the rest of the countries from the regions participating.

On the other hand, there is the other actor that shows influence and pressure in the context of the war in Syria. The United States, which so far in the conflict, dedicated its efforts to destabilizing the government of Bashar al-Assad by financing rebels and under arguments of fight against terrorism carried out bombings in the territory. In addition, when the regime under the leadership of the current president Donald Trump started, it was affirmed that the presence of the United States in Syria would be indefinite as long as it is necessary. This country currently has about 2,000 soldiers in Syria, who are dedicated to the training and advice of the opposition forces and that face the jihadist group so-called Islamic State (United States Department of State, 2017). The truth is that, by December 2017, the jihadist fighters were defeated militarily from practically the entire territory, causing the United States to evaluate its military presence in the Arab republic. That is why, the US position took a turn and in its declarations the government affirmed that the participation of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, is important in the negotiations about

the future of Syria (Brockwehl & Coppernoll, 2017). Even when the government of Donald Trump was implacable at the time of condemning the Syrian leader, pointing him out as guilty of the entire crisis and even demanding the cessation of his duties.

Finally, there are actors like the European Union that do not longer concentrate their efforts on supporting the coalitions that are against the Syrian government. This results from the fact that, its attention has been completely diverted by the refugee crisis coming from Syria. Therefore, the European Union seemed very diplomatic by the end of 2017, expressing its satisfaction towards resolutions that emerged from the United Nations, which authorize the cross-border humanitarian operations in Syria. On the other hand, only through international organizations the EU urged the Syrian regime to allow permanent deliveries of aid and medical evacuations without restrictions (European Commission , 2017). This is how, the European actor in the Syrian conflict is now playing a role in which humanitarian initiatives stand out, but which is also a strategy to try managing and appeasing the waves of refugees. The European Union stepped aside and affirmed that it will only be willing to contribute to the reconstruction of Syria when a political transition is consolidated, becoming a more passive actor regarding the conflict.

After completing the first part of the proposal detailing the aspects that require immediate attention, it is important to emphasize that to identify each aspect the investigation took as reference a previous case in history such is the crisis in Lebanon.

As it is a crisis case of the nation-state similar to the one studied throughout this dissertation, it is possible to identify that there are certain protocols that are prioritized when taking the first steps in attention to a crisis. As in Syria, for the situation in Lebanon, a post-conflict scenario was proposed in which actions were taken regarding the repair of damages and the rehabilitation of victims as assured by the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) as there were initiatives that aimed to improve the negative results that the crisis left (CLDH, 2012). In addition, in the crisis in Lebanon the first intentions of reconstruction at local level are also identified, since as it was

published by the Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction the end of the tensions opened the gates so that the investment in reconstruction of infrastructure and humanitarian aid enter the country. Finally, it is emphasized that in the case of Lebanon, it is also considered important to review the agendas of the actors involved. According to the publications of Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, it began by exposing the proposals on the National Indicative Plan (NIP), which reflected the efforts that were expected from the actors to make the reconstruction viable and to face the challenges what awaited them (Conciliation Resources & Saferworld, 2012).

3.2. Conflict Resolution mechanisms

This subchapter of the academic investigation aims to identify mainly the context in which the envisioned reconstruction is going to set its basis. After all the analysis about how the crisis started, how it transformed into a war and how it developed through time; it is important to establish a starting line which would permit to start defining the situation as the post-conflict stage. Therefore, first the subchapter defines the elements for the forthcoming context, in other words, which is the reality of the Syrian state after 6 years and which are the challenges that the reconstruction will face. Then, it is also worth mentioning the post-conflict development strategies that have started to emerge, primarily referring to those approaches, which help to ease the situation and that are spaces to raise common objectives among actors. Finally, the subchapter creates possible scenarios transforming the conflict; these projections are basically the different paths that the crisis could take at this stage.

3.2.1. Elements for the forthcoming context

The Syrian war has certainly marked not only the history of the country, but also it has alarmed the international community. For many years, the region has been controversial, due to the numerous conflicts that have taken place around the Arab countries. The case of Syria added to the list and has, after all this time, impacted worldwide by its gravity and large extent. The context after 6 years is not encouraging, however it is important to analyze it in order to understand the challenges ahead for both the government as well as for the external actors involved. Thus, the following section presents the current

context of Syria, which is the starting point to create and idealize the post-conflict scenario.

First, the situation in Syria has officially reached its sixth year as an armed conflict and it has caused the worst humanitarian crisis registered in the world since the Second World War, characterized by the fact that civilians are the principal victims of it. Approximately 13.5 million of habitants in Syria, which is the three quarters of its population, are in a vulnerable position and urgently need humanitarian assistance, such as shelter, water and food. Plus, 6.3 million individuals have been internally displaced and other 4.7 million are currently living in difficult access areas or war zones, where also international great powers and the rest of the foreign actors have consolidated their presence and violent performance. Added to the victims are more than 11 million Syrians that have abandoned their hometowns and have escaped to the neighboring countries, being Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan the host countries of the largest number of refugees (European Parliament, 2017).

It must also be considered the presence in Syria of the jihadist groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State among the others armed insurgent groups that emerged. Groups, which are responsible for brutal outrages, including torture, children and women slavery, forced recruitment, sexual violence and plentiful executions. The concern deepens considering that there are still areas controlled by said jihadists, which are permanently putting the welfare of the habitants that stayed at risk, also using them as shields and hostages of their violent campaigns (United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, 2017). Even though the international community has defined these groups as terrorists thereby a threat to international security, the war crimes and the crimes against humanity remain unpunished. This impunity has allowed serious violations to human rights and to the principles of humanitarian law, since it cannot be expected that terrorists' groups could respect schools, hospitals, civilian areas, any infrastructure or refugee camps.

The Syrian context constitutes also a reminder about the Geneva II Conference, the several discussion rounds and the UN Security Council resolutions, in which all parties expressed their concern and urged to solve the conflict in Syria by reconfiguring the political system through processes that

encourage peace agreements and that engage the interests and aspirations of all segments of the population (Ziadeh, 2017). In effect, the Syrian context provides scope for any political process that aims to put an end to the crisis and to achieve sustainable peace. Though, any proposal must prioritize non-impunity, transparency of knowledge, efficient justice, true forgiveness and amendments between the parties. These are guarantees that are not only much needed, but that can also ensure the effectiveness of any conflict resolution method for Syria.

It is also important to mention that, the Syrian context projected abroad reveals the 884.461 applications made by Syrians, requesting international protection in Europe between 2011 and 2016; and how several States have denied them. Thus, it is exposed that the right of asylum to Syrian individuals and other refugees is not being respected, and so neither values of the European Union. In fact, fences have been built and borders have been secured and sealed against refugees, eliminating the alternatives of a safe shelter and legal access to the Union. As a result, the EU Member States unintentionally have been contributing to those criminal organizations that smuggle human beings. The European Union, then, has failed to find an appropriate solution to the refugee crisis, and to this deed, are added acts such as the signing of the migration agreement between the EU and Turkey, which not only infringes the Geneva Convention, but also allows Turkey to systematically violate human rights. Certainly, the 911km-sealing wall in the Turkish-Syrian border used to shoot individuals attempting to cross is a vivid proof of said violations (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2017).

In addition to this context, is the fact that for many years, even before the crisis started, Syria has managed increasing poverty indicators due to the negligence of the Syrian administration in implementing the measures that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank demanded as conditions to alleviate the economic crises in which the country frequently entered. Then, when the Syrian war started, the severe economic sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union against Bashar al-Assad's regime not only aggravated even more the financial situation of the citizens, but also it pushed the government to respond with blockages to humanitarian aid. Therefore, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC along with

other UN agencies are now urging to review those sanctions for the sake of the situation (Chatham House, 2017).

Finally, the context in Syria presents a conflict that continues deteriorating, due to the intervention of regional actors and of great powers that pursue their own interests. Therefore, the Syrian conflict can be defined nowadays as a proxy-war, which segregated regions and encouraged a violent competition between the states. In other words, history is repeating itself in Syria as the external actors have taken advantage of a conflict to perpetuate others, such as the arms race, the geostrategic control and the power struggle. Then, the responsibility does not rely on one specific actor only, since all the parties have somehow violated international law, have occupied the territory, have sponsored bombings and have strengthened the creation and maintenance of armed terrorist groups.

3.2.2. Post-conflict development strategies

The internationalization of the Syrian crisis not only has engaged more actors into the conflict, but has also risen up the concern about the post-conflict situation to the international organisms and to the different coalitions that the parties have formed. Thus, from various perspectives, several proposals have emerged. The objective is to enroll and in some way commit the members of the international community and, above all, the Syrian state and the opposition groups, as main protagonists of the conflict. Certainly, the magnitude of the conflict in Syria has put pressure on the States and forced them to accept the responsibility up to the point of finally taking actions. Therefore, this segment of the investigation focuses on the attempts that mark the origin of the post-conflict context.

One of the most representative initiatives pro-solution in the middle of this war is the formation of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress. Specifically, the creation of a constitutional commission within the congress, which will be in charge of introducing amendments to the Syrian constitution. On one hand, representatives of the Government, who finally agreed to participate actively, will integrate the commission. On the other hand, it will also have the presence of an opposition delegation of those groups considered more representative

(Celik, 2017). It is important to mention that, three of the countries that can guarantee the ceasefire are sponsoring this initiative - Russia, Iran and Turkey – thus, they have been the ones in charge of proposing candidates for the commission. The city of Sochi in Russia was chosen as the venue for the meeting, which also demonstrates the involvement and interest that this great power has had in initiating the peace processes in Syria.

In addition, the United Nations is also involved in this process positively expecting success regarding the constitutional reform. It must be remembered that the assistants of this congress had also initially accepted the negotiations rounds of Geneva, however these never materialized and were considered failures according to the UN. In this same framework of negotiation, the constitutional commission of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress is created and has certainly managed to bring together the main parties of the conflict (Korybko, 2017). More importantly, it has succeeded in getting the participants to accept the objective of this commission, which is constitutional amendment. In other words, they have finally agreed to leave aside the resilience on the subject and be part of the political transition process that Syria desperately required. Despite the entire congress itself is clearly sponsored by external actors allied to the government, when trying to find a solution to the crisis, even the counterparty that is the opposition decided to get involved in this process.

Simultaneously, the United Nations Organization has not stopped the efforts to contribute to the solution of the crisis in Syria. As detailed in other segments of this research, several proposals have emerged from the UN and its different agencies. Among these, draft resolutions that focused mainly on the ceasefire, that condemned acts of violence and that defended human rights. However, none of these proposals had greater scope, others were imminently rejected and others were not properly honored. Therefore, after 6 years and without having agreed on a clear line of how to handle the conflict in Syria, for 2017 in the fourth round of the Astana talks, Russia, Iran and Turkey signed a Memorandum on “the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic”. The document states that the creation of demilitarized zones is a temporary measure that will initially last six months. Although the Syrian government alleging that it is against their interests rejected it, the UN

Secretary-General affirmed that Syria must accept and comply with it (Talukdar & Anas, 2017).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) accepted the memorandum and ratified the establishment of demilitarized zones in four regions, Latakia province, Idlib, Hama and Aleppo, and added the northern area of Homs province, the suburb of Ghouta in Damascus and areas of the south of the country such as Daraa and Quneitra. Additionally, the three signatory countries will act as guarantors of this memorandum, therefore, they have assumed direct responsibilities and obligations within this project. The commitments acquired consist on providing fast and safe humanitarian access; creating conditions for the provision of medical assistance to the local population and meeting the basic needs of civilians. Also, their duties extend to the point of taking measures to restore basic infrastructure, reinstate water supply networks and electricity distribution; and create the conditions for the safe return of refugees and internally displaced inhabitants (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2017).

The academic investigation has highlighted these two initiatives that come from the international community, since, among others, these are the only two that have managed to consolidate tangible and achievable plans. In addition, these two attempts stand out especially for actively involving the actors of the Syrian conflict. Certainly, said proposals were not born from a local point of view as wished, however they are a way of demonstrating that the internationalization of the conflict can ease tensions and facilitate peace processes. In addition, the Congress as well as the Memorandum materialize the intervention of external actors in favor of creating the post-conflict stage for Syria. In other words, their influence over Syria changes from being purely military, to focus on the reconstruction of the state. However, as has been noted in previous cases, the successful development of these proposals will depend on the will and commitment of the actors.

3.2.3. Transformation of the conflict

To continue consolidating the post-conflict scenario of the Syrian Arab Republic, it is important to consider the different courses that the crisis could

take. Therefore, the investigation creates in this segment three possible scenarios transforming the conflict in Syria, taken from the condition of the country by 2017. Hence, before formulating a proposal that solves the situation in the Arab country, it is necessary to consider the dynamism that conflicts can have. Being a situation within the field of social sciences, there are numerous ways to find a closure and start a reconstruction process. Certainly, the solution attempts for the Syrian conflict should focus on positively helping the state, however it is important to identify the starting point on which these initiatives will work. Considering that the situation in Syria is not exempt from sudden changes, then, the investigation visualizes these possible scenarios to broaden the scope.

The first possible starting point that could be established is the collapse of the Syrian regime. The Government of Bashar al-Assad faces increasing recruitment difficulties even among the Alawite population to which it belongs. The economic situation is delicate, due to international sanctions imposed since the beginning of the crisis. In addition, the rebel groups have managed to establish themselves on the border with Jordan, their permanent presence a few kilometers from Damascus, the capital, generates significant psychological pressure on its inhabitants. However, according to certain academics in Global and International Studies, a total collapse of the government seems unlikely. Those fighting on al-Assad's side have reasons to fear the triumph of their opponents, due to the political change that it would represent. This reasoning prevents the fracture of the army and the mass resignations of the government authorities. Additionally, the Russian support is a decisive reinforcement for the much-needed national troops and to stabilize the fronts. The fall of president al-Assad would not mean the end of the war, since probably, would begin the power struggles between the numerous coalitions. Finally, the collapse of the regime would not solve the territorial problem with the Kurdish people; on the contrary, it would cling them more to the zones in the north of the country (Choksy & Bennett, 2017).

The second possible scenario is an inclusive government but without Bashar al-Assad. Thus, throughout the conflict and with the abandonment of important authorities, there has been speculation about the possibility of a coup

d'etat in the hands of the military deserters. In addition, some actors have suggested the possibility of creating a new government in which the opposition also participates. The main point of friction is the current leader of the country. Opposition groups reject him, assuring that the Syrian president is the root of the problem. According to the members of the Syrian National Coalition, the main objective must be finding a way to end the war. However, said group believes that there is no way out without a transition to a democratic system where al-Assad and its close circle do not participate. In fact, despite the exhaustion of war among the opposition groups, there is a certain consensus between them about refusing imminently a political agreement involving al-Assad. This is one of the reasons why the Geneva negotiation rounds did not move forward and then mostly were unsuccessful (Global Security Organization, 2017).

The last scenario that could be contemplated considering the situation in Syria, according to the academics, is a transition process negotiated with President Bashar al-Assad. In spite of all the problems that the administration is going through, the war can still last for many years due to the alliances that the regime has made to get support. However, it is unlikely that among the international community this extension would be accepted, especially if as a result the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in developed countries continues. To restraint this effect, the states financing the rebel groups could the provision of capital and resources, which would weaken the opposition. This would urge the leaders of the opposition groups to concentrate their efforts specifically on creating an inclusive government. However, it would also oblige them to accept a regime in which al-Assad continues as a leader (Syrian Center for Political & Strategic Studies , 2017). Even though that would not be the ideal agreement, it would be at least the most harmonic one, considering the six years of constant struggle that the country has survived to achieve a political process that benefits all the parties. In other words, this last scenario visualizes a hybrid starting point in which both, the members of the government and the members of the opposition, arrive to a pressured consensus, but that would allow them to work together.

To resume, this second part of the reconstruction proposal has focused on conflict resolution mechanisms, then this section was divided into the three

study lines that allow the proposal to continue its reconstruction path supported by the concept of peace-keeping. Before further explaining it with theoretical arguments, this academic research has taken another historical case to compare it with the situation in Syria, since it also uses the logic around peacekeeping. The study case of the Cyprus Island is a suitable example to explain the next protocols to be performed in a reconstruction phase after the first peacemaking actions had been already taken. As the first multidimensional operation, it is important to emphasize the UN's involvement along with the humanitarian mission in Cyprus, in particular, illustrates the new and more demanding environment within peacekeeping operates. This reflects that, a peacekeeping plan starts by identifying the elements for the forthcoming context as did in the present investigation (Szulc, 2007).

At this point in the comparison scenario presented, there were more than 70 signed and broken ceasefire agreements and in order to 'buy time' for diplomacy several interventions were displayed through the territories until the agreements of the countries were finalized, proving that post-conflict development strategies were in motion as the new Republic of Cyprus was being established. Finally, according to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in order to continue the peacekeeping strategy it was necessary to look for ways to avoid triggering much more devastating conflicts as many actors were involved. It was understood then that, only through any kind of settlement it was possible to transform the conflict and find stability, peace, strong but democratic central state organizations, fair distribution of welfare and economic resources, and peaceful interaction among cultures and faiths (Soydemir, 2018). In this sense, the above-mentioned case as well as the present investigation aim to exemplify how the concept of peacekeeping can be put into practice.

3.3. General post-conflict outlook

This subchapter of the academic investigation states a framework for the reconstruction of the Syrian nation-state. The proposal, considering the futuristic approach in the chosen theme, gathers information in order to determine what will be the condition and participation of the actors within the

post-conflict situation in Syria. Also, this segment visualizes a solution that is linked to peace processes. Therefore, the first part determines the outputs within the post-conflict context, specifically referring to the actors who will no longer get involved in Syria. The second part focuses on the coalition of constructive influences, which details those actors that will definitely stay and participate in Syria's reconstruction. The last section creates a sustainable peace-building process for Syria, focused on the long-term goals of the nation-state.

3.3.1. Outputs within the post-conflict context

As the conflict in Syria seeks for its closure, the interests of the actors have also been refocused. Several states involved who actively influenced and participated during the last 6 years of crisis, for the post-conflict context, will have reconsidered their position. Certainly, numerous states have benefited from armed conflicts, considering the investment opportunity that those situations represent for them. Thus, over time countries have preferred to manage war economies. However, a reconstruction process is a totally different logic in which the investment is certainly greater and there is no room for all the actors. In the case of Syria, there is a marked segmentation between the parties, as it has been since the beginning of the conflict. Therefore, in this segment of the research the actors whose participation will not be relevant or who will not be part of the reconstruction period of the Syrian Nation-State are named.

In the first place, there is one of the states that made its way through the conflict by using different direct and indirect mechanisms. The United States became the strongest and most stable counterpart within Syria. As a world power, on one side, it exerted international pressure over the Syrian state and, on the other side, it financed rebel and opposition groups to destabilize the government. Also, the US declared that defeating the so-called Islamic State was its main motivation and the main reason of its presence in Syria. However, for the sixth year of conflict the power that the terrorist group had over the territory and over the population was diminish. In fact, this represented a victory for all the states fighting against terrorists. Therefore, the administration of the

President of the United States, Donald Trump, has been forced to accept that Bashar al-Assad will remain in power until 2021. Simultaneously, the president withdrew troops from Syria and pulled out from the UN Global Pact that seeks to address migration and refugee conditions (DePetris, 2017). These represent the first signs that President Trump no longer finds meaning in Syrian interventionism.

Washington's strategy during the conflict went beyond overthrowing President Bashar al-Assad, since the United States aimed to set up a new Middle East with countries and allied governments. However, the investment required to achieve this goal, could destabilize the country and certainly the risk was very high due to the presence of the other world powers. Therefore, the presence of the United States in Syria no longer has any motivation. If the administration of Bashar al-Assad has rejected any peace initiative that is sponsored by the West, the US certainly will not participate in the reconstruction process. In other word, once the ceasefire is finalized, the investment that the United States has in Syria will paralyze. In addition, when the reconstruction works begin, this great power of the West will not perceive any benefit or participation in this process. This then forces the country to withdraw from Syria.

Consequently, and maintaining the same logic in which the United States is removed from the game board, it is important to mention that this directly affects the opposition groups. These groups throughout the conflict counted on the great power of the West as their principal provider of capital, human and war resources. Certainly, the active participation of the opposition depended on how much international funding it received. Syrian opponents strongly believe that continuous international support would prevent a resounding victory for Bashar al-Assad and his supporters. However, in the last months of 2017, the weakening of these groups was evident since aid, money and arms were reduced (Kahl & Goldenberg, A Strategy for Ending the Syrian Civil War, 2017). In other words, when the interests of the actors that finance the opposition groups changed, it put at risk the existence of these groups. The withdrawal of some of these conglomerates will be a matter of time. Others, on the contrary, will be forced to negotiate with the government in order to find the integral political solutions that the country needs. This last fact is evidenced with

the attendance of the most relevant opposition groups at the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi.

Additionally, it is important to review the participation of the states that also acted against the regime in Syria. For example, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which are main defenders of the opposition, but have announced their departure from the territory. Which means that, there is not an interest on participating in the reconstruction of Syria, thus these countries looked for a less destructive alternative to get out of the conflict. In the case of Jordan, especially, it was also a way to recover relations between states, since for 2017 it announced that bilateral relations with the Syrian government are progressing in the right direction (Ellen Cole, 2017).

Something similar happens with the United Kingdom. It is important to mention that the official governmental speech, in the beginning, demanded al-Assad to leave the presidency as a first measure for peace. Nevertheless for 2017, the British Government declared that the departure of Bashar al-Assad was no longer a prerequisite, but part of the transition. In addition, the United Kingdom is analyzing whether or not it must comply with more than 215 million euros in aid for local populations and for communities exiled in other parts of Syria (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2017). This means that, although states such as the UK put pressure during the crisis years, for the post-conflict context its interest would not be the same. The investment represents providing resources for Syria, without obtaining any benefit or accomplishing any condition of the British. Therefore, the United Kingdom would decide not to interfere anymore in the Syrian situation and the country would detach from the responsibilities that it encompasses.

3.3.2. Coalition of constructive influences

During the crisis in Syria it was remarkable how the actors formed their alliances to help the parties. For this situation, it is not appropriate to use the term “winners”, considering all the losses perceived and all those affected by the conflict. However, there are actors that, despite the situation, will be somehow favored. In the previous section, the actors that would withdraw from the context were mentioned. In this segment of the investigation, the actors that

will remain present and participate in the reconstruction processes of Syria are analyzed. After many years of war, finally the power and resources of some of the actors stood out, and allow them to continue their involvement in the Syrian territory. Therefore, the alliances formed not only aimed to support within the battlefields. The supporters were looking to compromise, in some way, their stay in the post-conflict stage, since this is the phase where opportunities are created and benefits are perceived.

In the first place and as one of the main actors is the Syrian government. Although the regime had to ask for help during the civil war that the country was going through, this actor remained firm to defend the country's sovereignty. President Bashar al-Assad to face the circumstances always looked for ways to not lose control over the government. In fact, the achievements of the Syrian Arab Army returned little by little the security and stability to many areas in Syria. This also helped the restoration of economic activities in the country, and marked the beginning of the reconstruction processes (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace , 2017). Remaining in power despite the entire scenario that pressured and moved around the Syrian regime; could be considered as a victory for the president. Even though this victory was only possible thanks to the international aid that the country received, this meant that the al-Assad administration regained control of a large part of the territory. The Syrian government is an actor that has been strengthened with time and that has demonstrated to be difficult to defeat.

Directly related to the reinforcement of the Syrian government is the Russian Federation, as one of the actors with an outstanding participation during the conflict and as the principal supporter of the regime. The power that this state has and the good relations that it maintains with the government of Bashar al-Assad, is what allowed it to be deeply involved in the conflict and in a certain way to control it. When Russia got involved in the crisis, it certainly ensured the survival of the al-Assad regime and at the same time it has increased its military presence in the country. It is not surprising then, that this country is present in the post-conflict context. Russia demonstrates its interest in resolving the situation in Syria, sponsoring peace initiatives such as hosting the Syrian National Dialogue Congress. In other words, the government of

Vladimir Putin not only wants to end the crisis, but also determine the conditions.

Russia openly declared that it would continue to support the Syrian government in the war against terrorists, which ensures military support. In addition, this great power would certainly take advantage of the opportunities that the reconstruction stage would bring. In fact, president Bashar al-Assad has already given priority to Russian companies destined to invest in restoration plans, plus it has granted them customs facilities and the necessary permits to work in Syria (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017). In short, the strong alliance created between Putin and al-Assad, consolidated Russia's presence in the Arab territory in the long term and turned it one of the beneficiaries in the post-conflict scenario.

Then there is the case of Iran that also participated during the crisis on the side of the government and now confirms that it will continue to support Syria in the military field and also during the reconstruction stage. Its statements have demonstrated, above all, the interest of this country in eliminating terrorist groups, since this is one of the main problems of the region. In addition, the Iranian government ensures that the support provided to Syria will lay the foundations to strengthen the Arabs, away from the influence of the West. In this same line countries like Jordan or Lebanon are added. These countries did not have a large presence in the conflict, but they were affected by its consequences, especially with the large waves of migration (Middle East Institute, 2017). Therefore, the interests of these states also focus on the Syrian reconstruction, since this will consequently restore stability and order in these countries.

Additionally, there are also states that participated during the crisis but whose position changed after six years of conflict. This is the case of Turkey, since the government declared the Operation Euphrates Shield in Syria terminated. This defensive operation focused on confronting terrorist groups such as the so-called Islamic State. It is important to remember that, in the beginning, Turkey served as a support to the front that led the United States against the Syrian regime. However, by 2017, after helping regain control over the Syrian territory that was dominated by terrorist groups; Turkey completely

turned its position. The Turkish government is making close contacts with Russia and Iran, thus the states assume the responsibility to end the civil war and to define the future of Syria (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017). Turkey has rethought its alliances and found an opportunity to maintain its relevance and participation. Recall that its interest is based on controlling the Turkish-Syrian border and therefore, Turkish troops still in the Syrian territory. However, this control mechanism would no longer be an imposition on the government of Bashar al Assad, but would be supported by it considering the improvement of the diplomatic relations between these states.

Finally, the post-conflict environment adds a new preponderant actor that also takes advantage of the opportunities offered by this stage in Syria. China emphasizes the need to support Syria after the devastating crisis and shows its intention to increase cooperation in all economic sectors. The commitments with China ensure to increase trade with Syria. It is presumed that the Chinese investment could reach the 2billion dollars in this reconstruction phase in Syria. In addition, there are companies such as 'China National Heavy Duty Truck Company' that already propose projects to build roads, bridges, airports, hospitals, and restore electricity and communications. China stands out as a country that plans many years in advance. That is why, among its projects, it intends to create the New Silk Road, which consists in a set of transports and infrastructures that unite the entire Eurasian continent (Elazar, *Moving Westward: The Chinese Rebuilding of Syria*, 2017). In this way, China will be able to send its products through a land route from China to the Mediterranean through Iran and Iraq. The Asian giant became an unexpected actor in the context, but that has clearly established its economic interest regarding Syria.

3.3.3. Sustainable Peace-building for Syria

Throughout the academic research, a review of all the factors that influenced the Syrian conflict has been made, in order to finally construct a solution proposal. Considering the serious consequences from which the country will have to be lifted, the resolution initiatives must collaborate not only to build peace in Syria, but also to be sustainable over time. In addition, the investigation reaches this segment after having compiled the information to

suggest solutions that are realistic and achievable for the Syrian case. Certainly, the impact of this crisis has been global, however little progress has been made in positive results. Thus, with a country that continues to be politically, economically and socially devastated, the main objective is to seek peace-building mechanisms to recover the nation-state.

In the first place, it is important to consider that any proposal to alleviate the situation in Syria must emerge from a local perspective. Certainly, the solution to the war needs the participation of the Syrian Government and the opposition, because only the Syrians themselves can determine their fate and help Syria to maintain its status as a nation-state. In other words, to start, the Arab world must not longer be seen from a Western perspective. An analysis of the conflicts during the last century shows that the idea of preventive war and the excuse of the war against terrorism have served to invade different Arab countries (O'Keeffe & Pásztor, 2017). Syria was not an exception of the attempts to impose a Western order, since this is a country where the severe order that dominated for so many years was changed for a democracy that was not understood, neither agreed.

Undoubtedly, the Arab world is one where life is understood from a very different scope from the one we are used to in the West. It cannot be judged which perspective is better or which is the most advisable, since it is necessary to understand that the logics vary from one region to another. Neither is an option to dictate ways of life or pretend to change the way of thinking of the inhabitants, as has been intended and what the parties have faced since the beginning of the crisis in Syria (The Soufan Center, 2017). Thus, it must be clear that no country or group of countries should pretend to impose an order over another. In fact, this way of doing international politics has clearly failed, increased the internal problems of the countries and resulted in proxy wars, thus, for the Syrian case it must be absolutely rejected.

Simultaneously, the solution in Syria should consider strengthening the al-Assad administration. Not in the sense of favoring an absolutist regime, but rather in what refers to the institutional scaffolding and the state apparatus. The opposition gradually weakens every time it faces the Syrian Army, thus

maintaining resistance is no longer profitable option for the long-term. To be integrated into the political transition, it is necessary to cease the hostilities against the government. This does not mean that the opposition must absolutely submit to the impositions of the regime again. Therefore, the opportunity for dialogue that opens up in Sochi for the parties is so important, since if good results are obtained, the constitutional reform that Syria so desperately needs will finally be achieved. Within this point then, it is necessary to determine if the case of Syria is effectively a failed state or a crisis state. In case of being a failed one, there would be no solution other than the creation of a new state organization, convening a constituent assembly and a complete reorganization of the state apparatus. On the contrary, if it is a state in crisis, the solution can be raised from strengthening its existing organization, recovering political legitimacy and initiating a process in which the political power is transferred to new authorities that guarantee the recovery and respect of civil rights, politics and freedoms (Kudors & Pabriks, 2016).

By the studies on the subject, it is understood that the case of Syria is about a state in crisis and not a failed one, considering the few institutions that survived, the military recovery of the areas that were in the hands of terrorist groups and that the government has not been dismantled entirely. Likewise, the international relations of the government with neighboring countries are improving, especially the relationship with Turkey, something that was not considered possible around the international critics. Certainly, the antagonisms that exist between the member states of the international community were what fueled the Syrian conflict, along with their clear geopolitical interests on the Syrian territory. The disagreement between the United States and Russia regarding keeping Bashar al-Assad in power or not, drove them to use violent means imitating what happened a few years ago in Libya. However, this is not exactly a way out of the conflict, since it only changes the course of the situation, but it does not guarantee a solution. The truth is that, backed by the latest constitutional reform that took place in Syria, the president must legitimately continue in power until 2021 (Kahl & Goldenberg, 2017). Which must be respected, and on the contrary, it should be seen as an opportunity to take advantage of the constitutional reforms and policies to seek amendments in order to manage in a better way the next electoral process.

However, to make possible the above-mentioned argument, tensions must be eased between Sunnis and Shiites who are in constant struggle for power. It must be remembered that in Syria more than 85% of the believers are Sunni and the remaining 15% are Shiites. Then it is a country where a majority is governed by a minority, a fact that has deepened the rivalries between these two groups. The ideal scenario would be to separate the political aspect from the religious one, except this separation is not possible in Islam. Therefore, it only remains to divide the political participation so that the religious segments equitably represent the population (Eleiba & Milani, 2016). In other words, not because the president belongs to one of the branches of Islam, it means that this must be decisive to govern and be restrictive with the other religious branches. In fact, that is a way of consolidating dictatorships, and what is sought in this case is to find a political harmony with a religious included.

Certainly, diversity is one of the factors that the Syrian government has never managed since it is not only a religious matter, but cultural and social. Therefore, finally, the proposal of this academic investigation proposes to reform the Syrian nation-state towards Federalism. It is better to divide it in some way, than to lose the state. The explanation for this exit is that, although Syria is a power-centralized type of country, it is very varied and diverse at the ethnic and cultural level, as indicated in previous chapters. Diversity was also one of the causes of the violent confrontations in Syria, especially regarding the Kurdish population. This ethnic group inhabits in places geopolitically important for Syria, thus they are the ones who would benefit the most from federalism. As a form of government, this would allow them to achieve a legitimate semi-independence, considering that for many years the Kurdish population has fought for their autonomy and independence (Sider & White, 2017).

Federalism would also stop the persecutions and repressions not only against the Kurds, but also against any political, ethnic or religious group. Syria becoming a federal government represents finding a state organization, granting independence to the different segments of the population, and recognizing as well as respecting the particularity in each one of them. This way of dividing Syria will certainly awaken opponents inside and outside the country, however this transformation could serve as an example for other Arab countries

to demonstrate that it is possible a less traumatic political transition, organized and that can be the best way to build sustainable peace over time.

In order to better exemplify what this reconstruction proposal aims to project, the investigation has taken other former cases in history in which is also possible to identify a change in the systems to improve the nation-state management. The end of the 1980s and part of the 1990s were for the Maghreb countries, specifically Tunisia, Algeria and Libya, a time of systemic crises followed by overtures and political changes. Most of them were against an economic crisis, in addition to the recurrent crises due to the strong deficit of legitimacy that triggered the processes of liberalization and democratization (Desrues, 1997). Resulting in the fundamental change of regimes in these countries. The Maghrebian systems that have been taken into account for this comparison corresponded to the category of post-independence authoritarian systems, all of them presidential and with centralized state structures. Likewise, it was verified the existence of powerful informal social networks based on clientelism and a political-cultural system where the elites are differentiated of the masses. However, the concurrence of the aforementioned dysfunctions before social and economic demands, unbalanced the elites and the rulers, and led to coups d'état. As a result, the three countries were forced to begin processes of political overture and their first trials towards the democratization of their regimes (Bustos, 2005).

In summary, the nature of the political and economic crises shaped in each case the mode and scope of the different processes of transformation of the regimes. At this point it is worth mentioning that it is necessary to cite these crises and damages on political systems and populations, since, as in the past, it was these cases that allowed the theorists to develop, expand and refine the concept of peacebuilding. Probably, by the time the changes occurred in the countries of the Maghreb, it was not called that, but without a doubt the changes that took place at the political, institutional, economic, social and cultural levels are today what the concept of peacebuilding wants to transmit.

To conclude, the third and last chapter of this academic investigation had as objective to identify the components that could sustain the reconstruction of the Syrian nation-state; mainly, it aimed to construct a suitable

proposal to address the situation in Syria after the crisis. Therefore, as a first stage, the research analyzed the immediate attention requirements within the post-conflict context. Especially, it detailed the actions regarding the rehabilitation of damages and victims, the first attempts of state restructuring and it also reviewed of the actors' agenda or interests once the ceasefire is achieved. Moreover, the reconstruction proposal of this investigation continued by stating mechanisms of conflict resolution. In other words, it described the elements for the forthcoming Syrian context, since it is important to understand the current reality. Thus, the post-conflict development strategies already in course were also important to review, and then the research suggested the possible scenarios that could transform the conflict.

All the above-mentioned factors were necessary, so the reconstruction proposal would consider a broader scope. In the end, the academic investigation constructed the general post-conflict outlook. Regarding the actors, on one side it determined the outputs or the states whose interests would have changed within the post-conflict context. On the other side, it also mentioned the coalition of constructive and positive influences for Syria, which is the support that the territory would receive. Once defined the role of all the actors involved, a sustainable *peace-building* proposal for Syria was created as an academic contribution that aims to find closure to the crisis in the long-term. Based on previous cases in which the nation-state was recreated and its structure changed, the present reconstruction proposal is also developed together with the concept of *peacebuilding* as a way of creating a new reality and generating new opportunities within a territory that was already considered lost.

VI. ANALYSIS

Once all the necessary information regarding the chosen subject for the research has been compiled, it's important to remember that the main objective for this investigation is to analyze the possible post-conflict situation in Syria, considering the role played by the actors in the context of the reconstruction of the nation-state. Therefore, the compliance of said objective is verified in the

following analysis with the theories of international relations. The first theory chosen is the Theory of Conflict that allows analyzing the first two chapters of the investigation in which the background of the conflict is detailed. Then, the Peace Theory adheres to the research, specifically for the third chapter in which the reconstruction proposal for the Syrian nation-state is analyzed. In other words, this analysis will focus on explaining theoretically the motivations of the events during the conflict and how, from an academic perspective, a viable and tangible futuristic solution can be proposed.

Regarding the first chapter that focused basically on the crisis of the Syrian nation-state, we will take certain premises of the conflict theory to analyze it. The theorist Johan Galtung, as the first contributions to his theory contextualizes the conflict since it is certainly important to understand it. It is mentioned that conflict is a natural phenomenon in every society; thus, it is a social fact of life in society. Likewise, disputes are a historical constant, since they have appeared in all times and societies throughout the ages. Moreover, the theory affirms that the social change and the dynamics that move around the life of human beings are a consequence of the existence of the conflict (Galtung, 1972). Therefore, to understand and start to define the conflict in Syria the country's democratic political structure was analyzed, its economic indicators and finally the relation between the State and civil society. Three edges, which have presented the different problems that, the Syrian State faces economically, politically and socially. Undeniably the Syrian conflict has deep roots of structural damage to the nation-state, which led to the armed conflict; but that, according to the conflict theory, would contribute to start the debate about social progress. Thus, the Syrian conflict is aligned with the theory in the sense that these internal struggles, as profound as they may be, since they emerge from serious wars or from the threat of them, lead to the idea of change. Without characterizing them as good or bad, said clashes represent some kind of progress that will transform the course of the individuals or actors involved.

Moreover, the investigation stated the state of violence that prevails in Syria, and how every party involved emphasized its own reasons to legitimately use force. The conflict resolution theory foresaw, how it has been perpetuated

as a first instance in conflicts, contemplate the idea of seeking peace only by the use of force or the threat of it. The problem is that each party has considered imposing their own idea of peace, and therefore has its own methods of spreading its ideology. Not to mention that, the theory suggests the search for peace through the coalition, in relational terms, of several units immersed in the conflict, since that way they join capacities to look for alternatives to the use of force (Oberschall, 1974). Nevertheless, the research showed how the acts of violence from the Syrian State did not stop and showed itself as an actor that, having the legitimate monopoly on the use of force, had the responsibility not to weaken its powers. In addition, it also presented an opposition that is equally convinced of its principles, which has raised the aspirations for freedom and peace of Syrian civil society to extreme levels. Finally, there is evidence of the appearance and participation of terrorist groups that likewise with an ideology, also made their way through the conflict with permanence aspirations. None of the aforementioned parties has been able to fulfill their objectives without perpetuating acts of violence.

In addition, the consequences of the war in Syria were addressed, as well as its management, in order to fully understand which are the elements defining the conflict as a crisis and which were results perceived from it. The recounting of facts in a conflict, according to the Conflict Theory, is essential to emphasize the importance of giving an identity to the conflict in question. This identity implies analyzing the conflict as both a crisis and an opportunity, while understanding the incompatible objectives that emerged (Galtung, 2003). Therefore, this academic investigation detailed numerically the different type of Syrian victims, since they represent the most tangible effects of the crisis. In order to continue detailing the damages defining the conflict, it also took into account cases of transgression of human rights and then, it mentioned the articles of humanitarian law that have not been respected in Syria. While all the facts point the situation as a crisis, this segment of the research permitted, also, to highlight the importance of international regulations. In fact, these protocols should permanently be seen as positive alternatives and guidelines to follow, giving the countries the opportunity to open their scopes and avoid concentrating only on condemning the transgressions.

The research continues its analysis focusing on the interventionism within the Syrian Arab Republic, specifically referring to the actors. In this sense, first the investigation focused on the Syrian idiosyncrasy since the conflict is going to be analyzed from the actors involved and the local actors are a priority. Studying them helps to understand the logics that motivate the Syrian society. This first construction brings the research closer to what the Conflict Theory defines as the transformation of the conflict, since it states that all perspectives of the conflict must be pointed out, in order to understand where the problem could emerge from. In fact, the theorists consider that to study the origins of any conflict, its society must be considered first (Kazanský, 2015). Therefore, three divisions were made to explain the Syrian population, starting with its multicultural influences, continuing with the latent religious pressures and concluding with the segmentation of the Syrian society. This investigation recognizes the importance that has tradition, creed, custom, and ideology when all those collide in a conflict.

The academic research continued reviewing the actors and recognized which are the sources of direct assistance during the conflict. Understanding this assistance from an external point of view, since the internationalization of the conflict has generated a global concern and with it the actors' interventions. However, it is important to remark that certainly each one of the external actors have their own views on how the conflict should be managed, thus their actions respond to those agendas. This behavior will contribute to fulfill the statements of the Conflict Theory, which mention that in order to transform a conflict the gaps of conflict resolution proposals must be highlighted, since certainly as arbitrary as this proposals might be, they intended to truly contribute to the resolution, management and administration of conflicts (Miall, 2007).

Regarding the external actors performance, it can be affirmed that their assistance and intentions to solve the problem left many gaps on the way and certainly did not cease the crisis. However, these gaps are important to study since later they will contribute as basis for the transformation of the conflict. Therefore, the investigation has mentioned the allies from the State first, to catch the perspective that comes from the legitimate power projected in the actions of its external contributors. Then it was also remarked the participation of those actors against the state, who also added to the debate their views of

conflict resolution. Finally, it was also necessary to mention the visions of the International community, since the very nature of these organisms is to seek and cooperate with the common wealth of those they represent, even if their actions have not been as effective as they should.

In addition, the academic investigation aimed to analyze the types of interventions within the Syrian Arab Republic. There were identified other external actors who characterized by their semi-direct involvement in the conflict. Their participation is measured according to the segments of society they influence. Agreeing with different theorists, the transformation of a conflict pretends to teach how to visualize and respond to social conflicts, turning them over into opportunities. Then a conflict could encourage to constructive change that could reduce violence and increase justice, being in direct interaction with social structures (Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, as a first important actor of the Syrian society, the role of private sector was taken into account considering the controversies that emerge from it. The fact that the government was constantly benefiting this segment for the financial rewards in return, impacted so deeply in the parts of the society that were disadvantaged, that certainly is one of the reasons that detonated the civil war.

Moreover, following this logic a new transversal actor emerged in the conflict. Indeed, the economic power of China made its appearance and openly expressed its intentions to stay and be part of the constructive change of Syria. Even if this aid has strictly an economic purpose, at the moment of solving the problem it sums as a resource. Then, from a more social perspective the research mentioned the sources of humanitarian cooperation that have been present before and during the crisis in Syria. This dissertation evidenced the importance of non-governmental organizations, since this actor compared with the rest, is the one that interact the most and more directly with social structures. Their objectives of aid, cooperation and assistance, appoints them as those actors that will positively support the conflict resolution and the reconstruction of the nation-state.

In the last segment of the dissertation, of the academic research directed its approach to the reconstruction of the Syrian nation-state. Therefore, it started by identifying the immediate attention requirements within the post-

conflict stage, as a way to establish a point of closure to violence and a starting point towards restoration. This segment, in accordance with the premises of the Peace Theory, recognizes that the violence immersed in the conflict has to be defined, but then to ensure the existence of peace it is necessary to avoid it. For this purpose, the theorists also considered necessary to understand the basic needs of society, such as welfare, the need for survival, representation, identity and freedom. Galtung assures that the balance of these four elements for all people would define peace and the absence of these would then result in human degradation (Galtung, 1990).

In this sense, the research recognized as a first necessary step to look for ways to rehabilitate the damages and the victims. In other words, it focuses on the most immediate and vulnerable areas resulting from the acts of violence, which attempted against the survival of the inhabitants. Then, recognizing the importance of providing welfare and giving back the identity to the nation, it was analyzed the first attempts of state restructuring, by stating the actions of the Syrian state that contribute the construction of peace. Subsequently, in order to ensure basic needs such as representation and freedom, the investigation also made a review of the actors' agenda to define which are the positive roles for peace that would keep the state from further degradation.

As a starting point in the reconstruction proposal of this academic research and also compared to a case – the Crisis in Lebanon - were all this first attempts could be highlighted, is possible to match the information gathered with Galtung's premises regarding peace-making, in which states that at first it is necessary to identify the efforts to bring the conflicting parties to a peace agreement. The concept also defends that there must be a big picture approach, since there exist many activities which take place in the name of peacemaking: preparing for peace, the negotiation process, the impact of violence, the peace accord, and the implementation and postwar reconstruction (Galtung, 2003). Indeed, the proposal has recognized the importance of the above-cited aspects and has complemented its investigations with the plans that effectively took place in order to start the post-conflict scenario.

In addition, the academic research also identified conflict resolution mechanisms, since it is complemented with what the Peace Theory defines as

positive peace. The concept mainly promotes the pacific solution of controversies and refers to the rehabilitation of damages and victims resulting from a conflictive situation, the reconstruction of the infrastructure, the restructuring of society, and its re-acculturation. Positive peace arises when social harmony is built, when violence is diminished in all its manifestations, when as a community it could be learned how to solve conflicts and differences in a peaceful way, and of course when there is a justice system that deals effectively and efficiently with conflicts between individuals (Shields, 2015). Then, the existent conflict resolution mechanisms aim to attack the negative consequences from which the nation-state must rise and intends to build the desired post-conflict context for Syria.

Following this logic, the investigation stated the elements for the forthcoming context, mainly by presenting the current situation inside the country and the visions from abroad in order to embrace the challenges in terms of rehabilitation, reconstruction and restructuring. Then, the post-conflict development strategies presented point to social harmony building, since they are the initiatives, which aim to pacifically solve the conflict through mechanisms that evoke justice, diminish differences and join efforts. Afterwards, the research also established ways to transform the conflict by creating possible scenarios for Syria. In fact, studying all the possible ways in which change can be presented contributes to effectively manage conflicts and reduce most of the risks. Then, the idea of a peace that only contemplates the end violence is left aside, and positions the most complete concept of positive peace.

At this point, it is important to highlight that the second part of the reconstruction proposal focuses on the next steps, since as predicted by the theorist MacQueen and its peace studies, *peacekeeping* further actions are needed, due to the inability of peacemakers to secure a lasting settlement. Therefore, the number of peacekeepers and keeping operations increases as the pursuit for peace continues. The research of peace operations focuses on several dimensions: (1) the peacekeeping and support tasks, (2) the difficult strategic environment, (3) contributors and motivations, (4) factors influencing success or failure, and (5) interconnections with the other activities of the *peacebuilding* process (MacQueen, 2006). Likewise, this academic work has

included the above-mentioned aspects to develop the second part of its resolution proposal and that it responds to the logic of *peacekeeping* as a concept that further solidifies the post-conflict scenarios for the Syrian nation-state once the first immediate measures were taken. As demonstrated in similar cases, it is necessary to identify these moments and expose the challenges, the strategies and possible outcomes in the proposal as they form a path to structure a more concrete proposal that lasts over time.

The course that the conflict has taken then up to this point establishes a positive precedent with positive prospects for the future to solve it. Therefore, the last segment of the research focused on the futuristic proposal to encourage reconstruction in the Syrian nation-state. According to what is established in the Peace Theory, the studies of a conflict and the resolution of it must be an interdisciplinary, professional, academic and activist space that covers knowledge of all kinds over the conflict, including techniques, methods, strategies and positive management systems (Howard, 2000). Certainly, throughout the investigation all the edges were covered from which the conflict can be analyzed so that it allows having a wide perspective of it and it permitted to establish the general post-conflict outlook. From an academic point of view, the investigation made an inventory of the actors and determined the course that each of them will take according to their actions and interests. This, in order to finally propose a solution directed to the reconstruction of the Syrian state-nation.

As for the actors involved and according to the Peace Theory, multilateral or bilateral strategies for peace need reformulation and reorganization. It is suggested that there must be a change guided by a strategy that prioritizes local needs above all, instead of subordinating itself to the priorities of the donors (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 1980). In this case, the investigation aimed, on one side, to establish the outputs within the post-conflict context in Syria. In other words, it analyzes the actors and determines which of these will be detached from the board in which they move due to the incompatibility of their interests. This is how, following the theory, the peace schemes were reorganized regarding some actors who in the end only got involved because of the profitability that the war brought them, but whose presence would not represent any benefit in the reconstruction stage.

In the other side, the academic research identified the coalition of constructive influences, which are in charge of reformulating the strategies pursuing peace. These actors managed to prioritize and focus support on the local needs for the Syrian territory. However, the theory states that there should not exist subordination that focuses on the priorities of the donors. In the case of the actors that will be present in the reconstruction period in Syria, said subordination is a fact due to the type of aid provided. These actors found ways to take advantage of a good intention that at the same time responds fully and favorably to their interests. Therefore, the submission of the Syrian government is not the ideal scenario according to the theory, however necessary since it is not a state able to face the situation by itself.

After having defined the procedure of the parties within the Syrian conflict, it is finally pertinent to suggest a solution. For the peace theory, the processes that contribute to the solution must be based on a strategic framework project that addresses the link between economic and social development, reconciliation and post-conflict retributive justice, the development of stability politics and democratic governability (Webel, 2007). In this sense, the investigation established a sustainable Peace-building proposal for Syria. The prepared solution focused on highlighting the importance of adapting any solution or reconstruction plan to the local reality taking into account especially the region to which it is addressed. It rejects then the interventionism and the imposition that could come from the outside and reinforces the national logics. In addition, addressing political stability and democratic governance, considers important to strengthen the entire state apparatus and make it inclusive. Additionally, the proposal contemplates that the process of reconstruction and future development of the nation-state must be accompanied by reforms that start from constitution to the form of government, so that they can last in the long term.

In addition, the proposed reconstruction is developed from the theoretical premises proposed by Galtung to define the processes of *peacebuilding*. The theorist states that, Peacebuilding is the process of creating self-sufficient structures that eliminate the causes of wars and offer alternatives to them in situations where they may occur. Also, it is the development of

constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to solve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict. Peacebuilding can include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation (Galtung, 1967).

When the United Nations Organization adopts the term *peacebuilding* defines it as the continuity of strategies, processes and activities aimed at sustaining peace in the long term, it focuses on the transformation towards more peaceful and preventive relations in the recurrence of violence; long-term governance structures; reconcile the differences; normalize relationships and build institutions that can handle conflicts without resorting to violence (United Nations Organization, 2017).

It is important to mention that the proposal developed throughout the third chapter of this research for Syria's reality is partially aligned to the adaptation that the United Nations has made to the concept of *peacebuilding*. Since, the UN proposes a continuity of strategies, normalization of relations and more institutions of control against violence. However, the concept created by Johan Galtung to define *peacebuilding* rejects actions that do not generate a profound change or that are limited to reinforcing efforts. Moreover, the theorist in his studies mentions that a coherent strategy of Peace must include among its assumptions, reconstruct government mechanisms to strengthen them and have legitimacy with its population and authority to exercise their ruling position, without these two factors it would not be possible to prevail the establishment of a new system (Galtung, 1967). Therefore, the proposal for the Syrian territory has not been encapsulated in the peacebuilding protocols according to the United Nations, but it has taken the concept in the most literal way proposing a transformation to a deeper and more radical level for the regime. Based on Morlino's studies on "*How political regimes change*" the reconstruction proposal of the Syrian state-nation is based on the existence of a fundamental change of system. For this, it is necessary to perform other functions or processes specifically political as the renewal of governors, laws or the operation of institutions (Morlino, 1985).

To conclude, it is important to mention that the theoretical premises have supported the general objective of the investigation along with trustful sources of information. In addition, it is important to minimize the arbitrariness within the present research, due to the nature of the chosen theme that has a futuristic vision. Certainly, to make assertions about the future of a conflict like the one of Syria the academic support is what assures the veracity of the predictions.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The present academic investigation posed as a hypothesis that, the development of the post-conflict condition of the Syrian State would depend on the individual efforts of the actors involved, which would lead to the resolution of the conflict and the reconstruction of the nation-state. In this sense, the research after compiling the necessary information and then comparing it with the theories of international relations; is in the capacity to affirm the verification of said hypothesis. In other words, the condition of the Syrian nation-state, despite not being very encouraging, gave signs of being able to enter a post-conflict logic. In this sense, it was evidenced that the development of both the conflict and the stage that comes after, depends on the actors and their participation as the main influence. Therefore, combining those same efforts makes it possible to contemplate a closure in the conflict, which results in a reconstruction by stages of the Syrian nation-state. However, it is important to recognize that each of these statements is perfectible, thus the investigation concludes as follows:

- The development of the post-conflict context raises from a nation-state in decline, since in the case of Syria the political structure, the economic system and the segments of society were disturbed at different levels. This aggravated the resolution possibilities since those are aspects of government management that were losing control.
- The crisis in which Syria entered, established a state of violence in which the use of force was recorded in all parties involved. This

deteriorated progressively the scenario, since in theory only the regime possesses the legitimate monopoly of the use of force. However, in Syria the violence escalated to the point of having a violent counterpart and creating terrorist groups. Each party through violent means was trying to build a course that would favor them in the future.

- The state of chaos and lack of control that broke out in Syria was sufficient motivation for the creation of belligerent or terrorist groups. These groups are able to grow fast and acquire more power, thus they become latent threats. The so-called Islamic State is the terrorist group that has reached the most in terms of growth, reaching such a level of influence that it became a representative actor in the conflict.
- The different types of victims, the violation of human rights and the breach of humanitarian law are aspects that made visible the reality and the seriousness of the conflict in Syria. These transgressions have been condemned at the discursive level, but they have not received the corresponding judgments.
- The conflict in Syria develops around a complicated and varied society. The complex Syrian idiosyncrasy has divided the population permanently for its multiculturalism, its religious influences and its political ideologies. A segmentation that is normal in the societies but that in the case of Syria has unleashed irreparable rivalries among them.
- The sources of assistance in favor of the regime have managed to achieve most of its objectives, such as: preventing the overthrow of president al-Assad, counteracting the armed power of the United States against the Syrian government, obtaining a predominant position in the negotiations regarding the future of the country. Especially in the case of Russia, which managed to consolidate its status as a global power, capable of influencing the design of international order.
- The participation of actors against the regime began with the revolts of the opposition, which led to the intervention of the great powers. The

support provided especially by the United States is what ensures not only the existence, but also the military strength of opposition groups. The external support helped the opposition to consolidate war fronts and maintain control of parts of the territory.

- Conflict resolution mechanisms are necessary to determine a ceasefire and enter to the reconstruction process. Actors of great relevance, such as Russia, play a leading role in positive initiatives that seek the resolution of the conflict by integrating all the parties.
- The reconstruction proposal developed through the present investigation has been developed based on theoretical concepts such as *peacemaking* and *peacekeeping*, both necessary to establish a basis and a starting point to formulate a post-conflict context.
- The investigation creates a reconstruction proposal for the Syrian Nation state, in which it determines which actors are going to withdraw their participation and which actors will reinforce it by the compatibility of interests regarding the reconstruction.
- In view of the reconstruction, the proposed solution points to the special strengthening of the Syrian government. Considering that the regime regained control of most of the territory and is victorious in the fight against terrorism, reconstruction plans aim to legitimize the state and its sovereignty, regardless of the name of the leader.
- The solution proposal revolves around reinforcing the government's institutional scaffolding to politically reform the state and make it more inclusive with all segments of society. In addition, it distances it from Western ideas of order and proposes constitutional reforms that change the form of government towards a federalism that can address the problems of diversity in Syria.
- The resolution of the conflict, complying with the hypothesis of this academic research, proposes to ease tensions and rivalries between the most representative religious groups who are deeply involved in the

conflict; in order to divide the political participation so that the religious segments equitably represent the population and the country finally finds a political harmony with the religious factor included and unifying the actors involved.

- The academic investigation concludes that Federalism is a better way of dividing the state organization and recovering from the crisis, than losing it. The division would avoid future ethnic, religious or cultural confrontations and would allow each group to achieve a legitimate semi-independence, but that would have to be governed by the federal state.
- The effectiveness of the Peacebuilding process that is proposed for Syria, depends on the approach to society and the synergy that can be achieved with the other aspects of the conflict. Meaning that, if there is no true social and cultural approach to the territory, the proposal will not be successful and the results will be worse, since it would only be reproducing a system of "help" from external actors in which the priority would be the interests of others before the national ones.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, this dissertation recognizes that there are several edges that must be taken into consideration and from which the conflict could be studied, due to the number of actors, resources and time involved. It also recognizes that while it is a tentative solution to a state in crisis, there are several limitations in its proposal that will involve other types of conflict resolution mechanisms and whose responsibility will not only fall on the Syrian government. For this reason, the dissertation recommends the following:

- The armed conflict has created a humanitarian crisis of immeasurable proportions. The Syrians escaping the conflict are the fastest-growing refugee population in the world. This requires, then, the political and diplomatic capacity of local, regional and international actors to end hostilities and create a credible negotiating process that can stop the dissolution of the country and bring hope to its inhabitants.

- The war in Syria resulted in a humanitarian crisis that moved beyond the borders of the State, even exceeding the Middle East region and displacing thousands of refugees to Europe. It is required a review of Europe's visible and invisible barriers regarding its migratory management policies, in order to incorporate the perspective of human rights in the immigration issue.
- Both Syria and the influential external actors should look at the situation and incorporate lessons from what happened in the other Arab countries in which similar movements have taken place. The search for spaces of freedom must be channeled through the promotion of changes towards systems based on democracy and participation.
- Considering the ability of terrorist groups on regaining power over the territories, it is recommended to maintain a permanent military control in alliance with other states regarding terrorism only in order to control the internal security of the countries and their resources.
- According with the theoretical premises, the study of conflicts and the information gathering should allow the researcher to have a more complete view of the context to be able to analyze and determine what are the necessary steps to follow in order to resolve a crisis.
- When looking for a point of closure of the crisis and the beginning of the post-conflict period, the research suggests focusing on what needs immediate attention. The rehabilitation of victims, damages and infrastructure, although it requires a significant investment, also constitutes to solve the aspects that were most damaged during the conflict and which impacted the most.
- Although the research seeks to end the conflict, it is recommended to continue the investigation specifically regarding the transgressions and violations registered, considering that the responsibility did not fall on any of the actors even though all those involved were criticized at some point in the conflict.

- Considering the number of actors that will be involved in the reconstruction process and all the benefits that will be granted, it is recommended to sign agreements or make negotiations in which the Syrian state has a permanent and active presence.
- The solution proposed for the conflict and for the reconstruction of the state is perfectible, thus it is recommended to complement it with proposals that identify the necessary resources and roadmaps in order to settle the constitutional reforms as well as the new form of government.
- Considering that the research topic refers to the Arab world, one of the regions in the world in which more conflicts are recorded, it is recommended to adapt both knowledge and as this case the proposals to a more local reality that truly meets the interests of its population.

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